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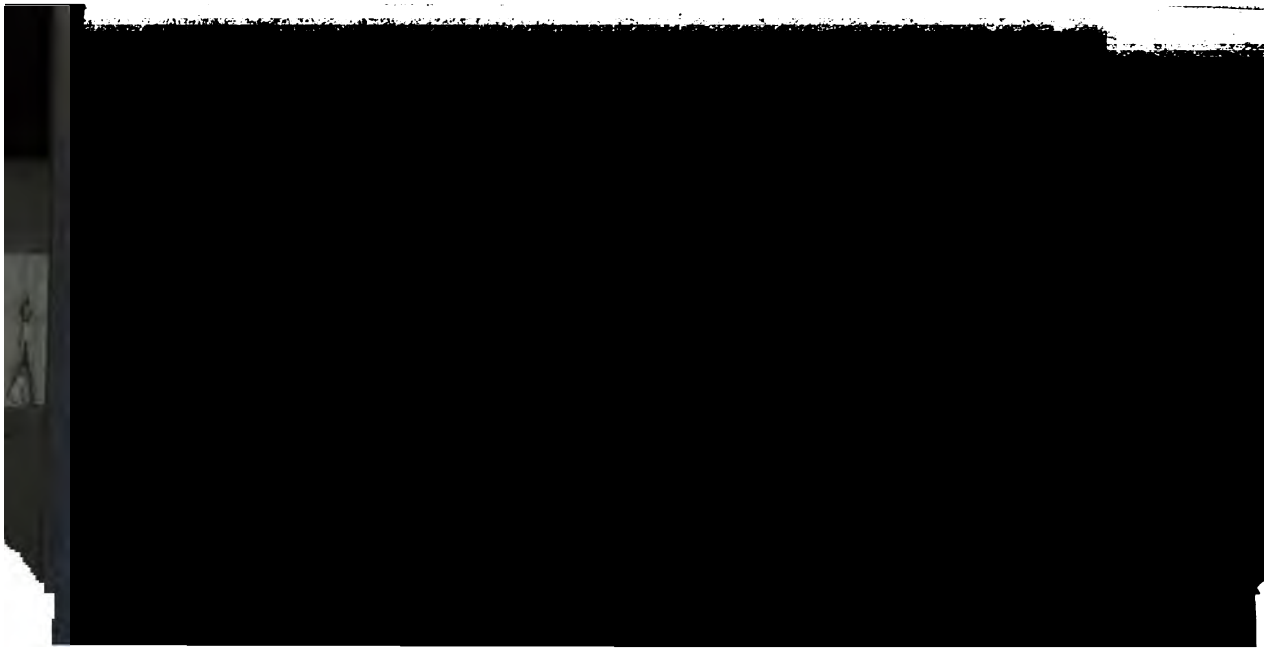

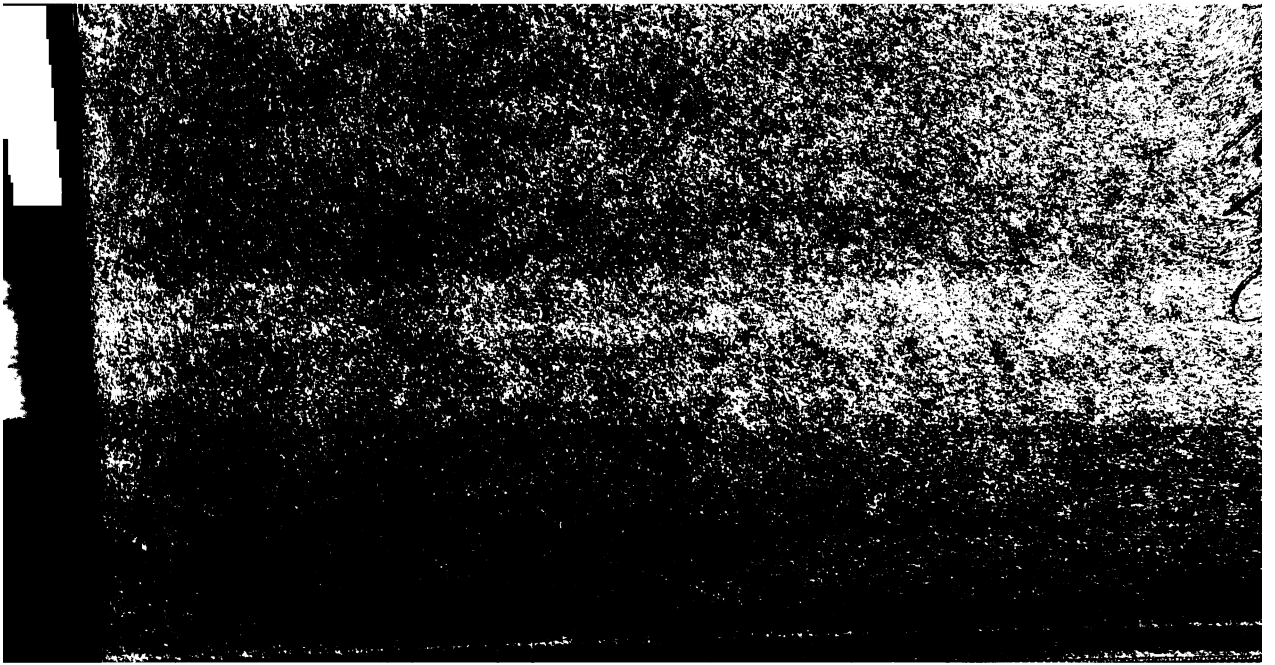

ECILIA

MEMOIRS

EIRESS

CECILIA,

OR

MEMOIRS

OF AN

HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for T. PAYNE and SON at the Mews-Gate,
and T. CADELL in the Strand.

M,DCC,LXXXVI.

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CECILIA.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

An Admonition.

THE Harrels and Mr. Arnott waited the return of Cecilia with the utmoſt impatience; ſhe told them with much concern the failure of her embaſſy, which Mr. Harrel heard with viſible reſentment and diſcontent, while Mr. Arnott, entreating him not to think of it, again made an offer of his ſervices, and declared he would diſregard all perſonal inconvenience for the pleaſure of making him and his ſiſter eaſy.

Cecilia was much mortified that ſhe had not the power to act the ſame part, and aſked Mr. Harrel whether he believed his own influence with Mr. Briggs would be more ſucceſsful.

"No, no," answered he, "the old curmudgeon would but the rather refuse. I know his reason, and therefore am sure all pleas will be vain. He has dealings in the alley, and I dare say games with your money as if it were his own. There is, indeed, one way—but I do not think you would like it——though I protest I hardly know why not——however, 'tis as well let alone."

Cecilia insisted upon hearing what he meant, and, after some hesitation, he hinted that there were means, by which, with very little inconvenience, she might borrow the money.

Cecilia, with that horror natural to all unpractised minds at the first idea of contracting a voluntary debt, started at this suggestion, and seemed very ill disposed to listen to it. Mr. Harrel, perceiving her repugnance, turned to Mr. Arnott, and said, "Well, my good brother, I hardly know how to suffer you to sell out at such a loss, but yet, my present necessity is so urgent——"

"Don't mention it," cried Mr. Arnott; "I am very sorry I let you know it; be certain, however, that while I have any thing, it is yours and my sister's."

The two gentlemen were then retiring together; but Cecilia, shocked for Mr. Arnott, though unmoved by Mr. Harrel, stopt them to enquire what was the way by

which

which it was meant ſhe could borrow the money?

Mr. Harrel ſeemed averſe to anſwer, but ſhe would not be refuſed; and then he mentioned a Jew, of whoſe honeſty he had made undoubted trial, and who, as ſhe was ſo near being of age, would accept very trifling intereſt for whatever ſhe ſhould like to take up.

The heart of Cecilia recoiled at the very mention of a *Jew*, and *taking up money upon intereſt*; but, impelled ſtrongly by her own generoſity to emulate that of Mr. Arnott, ſhe agreed, after ſome heſitation, to have recourſe to this method.

Mr. Harrel then made ſome faint denials, and Mr. Arnott proteſted he had a thouſand times rather ſell out at any diſcount, than conſent to her taking ſuch a meaſure; but, when her firſt reluctance was conquered, all that he urged ſerved but to ſhew his worthineſs in a ſtronger light, and only encreaſed her deſire of ſaving him from ſuch repeated impoſition.

Her total ignorance in what manner to tranſact this buſineſs, made her next put it wholly into the hands of Mr. Harrel, whom ſhe begged to take up 600*l.* upon ſuch terms as he thought equitable, and to which, whatever they might be, ſhe would ſign her name.

He ſeemed ſomewhat ſurpriſed at the ſum,

but without any queſtion or objection undertook the commiſſion; and Cecilia would not leſſen it, becauſe unwilling to do more for the ſecurity of the luxurious Mr. Harrel, than for the diſtreſſes of the laborious Hills.

Nothing could be more ſpeedy than the execution of this affair, Mr. Harrel was diligent and expert, the whole was ſettled that morning, and, giving to the Jew her bond for the payment at the intereſt he required, ſhe put into the hands of Mr. Harrel 350*l.* for which he gave his receipt, and ſhe kept the reſt for her own purpoſes.

She intended the morning after this tranſaction to ſettle her account with the bookſeller. When ſhe went into the parlour to breakfaſt, ſhe was ſomewhat ſurprized to ſee Mr. Harrel ſeated there, in earneſt diſcourſe with his wife. Fearful of interrupting a tête à tête ſo uncommon, ſhe would have retired; but Mr. Harrel, calling after her, ſaid, "O pray come in! I am only telling Priſcilla a piece of my uſual ill luck. You muſt know I happen to be in immediate want of 200*l.* though only for three or four days, and I ſent to order honeſt old Aaron to come hither directly with the money; but it ſo happens that he went out of town the moment he had done with us yeſterday, and will not be back again this week. Now I *don't believe* there is another Jew in the king-

kingdom who will let me have money upon the ſame terms: they are ſuch notorious raſcals, that I hate the very thought of employing them."

Cecilia, who could not but underſtand what this meant, was too much diſpleaſed both by his extravagance and his indelicacy, to feel at all inclined to change the deſtination of the money ſhe had juſt received; and therefore coolly agreed that it was unfortunate, but added nothing more.

"O, it is provoking indeed," cried he, "for the extra-intereſt I muſt pay one of thoſe extortioners is abſolutely ſo much money thrown away."

Cecilia, ſtill without noticing theſe hints, began her breakfaſt. Mr. Harrel then ſaid he would take his tea with them; and, while he was buttering ſome dry toaſt, exclaimed, as if from ſudden recollection, "O Lord, now I think of it, I believe, Miſs Beverley, you can lend me this money yourſelf for a day or two. The moment old Aaron comes to town, I will pay you."

Cecilia, whoſe generoſity, however extenſive, was neither thoughtleſs nor indiſcriminate, found ſomething ſo repulſive in this groſs procedure, that inſtead of aſſenting to his requeſt with her uſual alacrity, ſhe anſwered very gravely, that the money ſhe had juſt received was already appropriated to a

particular purpoſe, and ſhe knew not how to defer making uſe of it.

Mr. Harrel was extremely chagrined by this reply, which was by no means what he expected; but, toſſing down a diſh of tea, he began humming an air, and ſoon recovered his uſual unconcern.

In a few minutes, ringing his bell, he deſired a ſervant to go to Mr. Zackery, and inform him that he wanted to ſpeak with him immediately.

"And now," ſaid he, with a look in which vexation ſeemed ſtruggling with careleſſneſs, "the thing is done! I don't like, indeed, to get into ſuch hands, for 'tis hard ever to get out of them, when once one begins,—and hitherto I have kept pretty clear. But there is no help for it—Mr. Arnott cannot juſt now aſſiſt me—and ſo the thing muſt take its courſe. Priſcilla, why do you look ſo grave?"

"I am thinking how unlucky it is my Brother ſhould happen to be unable to lend you this money."

"O, don't think about it; I ſhall get rid of the man very ſoon, I dare ſay; I ſhall pay him off in a very few days,—I hope ſo, at leaſt——I am ſure I mean it."

Cecilia now grew a little diſturbed; ſhe looked at Mrs. Harrel, who ſeemed alſo uneaſy, and then, with ſome heſitation, ſaid,

"Have

"Have you really never, Sir, employed this man before?"

"Never in my life: never any but old Aaron. I dread the whole race; I have a ſort of ſuperſtitious notion that if once I get into their clutches, I ſhall never be my own man again; and that induced me to beg your aſſiſtance. However, 'tis no great matter."

She then began to waver; ſhe feared there might be future miſchief as well as preſent inconvenience, in his applying to new uſurers, and knowing ſhe had now the power to prevent him, thought herſelf half cruel in refuſing to exert it. She wiſhed to conſult Mr. Monckton, but found it neceſſary to take her meaſures immediately, as the Jew was already ſent for, and muſt in a few moments be either employed or diſcarded.

Much perplext how to act, between a deſire of doing good, and a fear of encouraging evil, ſhe weighed each ſide haſtily, but while ſtill uncertain which ought to preponderate, her kindneſs for Mrs. Harrel interfered, and, in the hope of reſcuing her huſband from farther bad practices, ſhe ſaid ſhe would poſtpone her own buſineſs for the few days he mentioned, rather than ſee him compelled to open any new account with ſo dangerous a ſet of men.

He thanked her in his uſual negligent manner, and accepting the 200*l.* gave her

his receipt for it, and a promiſe ſhe ſhould be paid in a week.

Mrs. Harrel, however, ſeemed more grateful, and with many embraces ſpoke her ſenſe of this friendly good-nature. Cecilia, happy from believing ſhe had revived in her ſome ſpark of ſenſibility, determined to avail herſelf of ſo favourable a ſymptom, and enter at once upon the diſagreeable taſk ſhe had ſet herſelf, of repreſenting to her the danger of her preſent ſituation.

As ſoon, therefore, as breakfaſt was done, and Mr. Arnott, who came in before it was over, was gone, with a view to excite her attention by raiſing her curioſity, ſhe begged the favour of a private conference in her own room, upon matters of ſome importance.

She began with hoping that the friendſhip in which they had ſo long lived would make her pardon the liberty ſhe was going to take, and which nothing leſs than their former intimacy, joined to ſtrong apprehenſions for her future welfare, could authoriſe: "But oh Priſcilla!" ſhe continued, "with open eyes to ſee your danger, yet not warn you of it, would be a reſerve treacherous in a friend, and cruel even in a fellow-creature."

"What danger?" cried Mrs. Harrel, much alarmed, "do you think me ill? do I look conſumptive?"

"Yes,

"Yes, conſumptive indeed!" ſaid Cecilia, "but not, I hope, in your conſtitution."

And then, with all the tenderneſs in her power, ſhe came to the point, and conjured her without delay to retrench her expences, and change her thoughtleſs way of life for one more conſiderate and domeſtic.

Mrs. Harrel, with much ſimplicity, aſſured her *ſhe did nothing but what every body elſe did*, and that it was quite impoſſible for her to *appear in the world* in any other manner.

"But how are you to appear hereafter?" cried Cecilia, "if now you live beyond your income, you muſt conſider that, in time, your income by ſuch depredations will be exhauſted."

"But I declare to you," anſwered Mrs. Harrel, "I never run in debt for more than half a year, for as ſoon as I receive my own money, I generally pay it away every ſhilling: and ſo borrow what I want till pay day comes round again."

"And that," ſaid Cecilia, "ſeems a method expreſsly deviſed for keeping you eternally comfortleſs: pardon me, however, for ſpeaking ſo openly, but I fear Mr. Harrel himſelf muſt be even ſtill leſs attentive and accurate in his affairs, or he could not ſo frequently be embarraſſed. And what is to be the reſult? look but, my dear Priſcilla, a little forward, and you will tremble at the *proſpect before you!*"

Mrs. Harrel ſeemed frightened at this ſpeech, and begged to know what ſhe would have them do?

Cecilia then, with equal wiſdom and friendlineſs, propoſed a general reform in the houſhold, the public and private expences of both: ſhe adviſed that a ſtrict examination might be made into the ſtate of their affairs, that all their bills ſhould be called in, and faithfully paid, and that an entire new plan of life ſhould be adopted, according to the ſituation of their fortune and income when cleared of all incumbrances.

"Lord, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrel, with a look of aſtoniſhment, "why Mr. Harrel would no more do all this than fly! If I was only to make ſuch a propoſal, I dare ſay he would laugh in my face."

"And why?"

"Why?—why becauſe it would ſeem ſuch an odd thing—it's what nobody thinks of—though I am ſure I am very much obliged to you for mentioning it.—Shall we go down-ſtairs? I think I heard ſomebody come in."

"No matter who comes in," ſaid Cecilia, "reflect for a moment upon my propoſal, and, at leaſt, if you diſapprove it, ſuggeſt ſomething more eligible."

"O, it's a very good propoſal, that I agree," ſaid Mrs. Harrel, looking very weary,

weary, "but only the thing is, it's quite impoſſible."

"Why ſo? why is it impoſſible?"

"Why becauſe—dear, I don't know—but I am ſure it is."

"But what is your reaſon? What makes you ſure of it?"

"Lord, I can't tell—but I know it is—becauſe—I am very certain it is."

Argument ſuch as this, though extremely fatiguing to the underſtanding of Cecilia, had yet no power to *blunt her purpoſe*: ſhe warmly expoſtulated againſt the weakneſs of her defence, ſtrongly repreſented the imprudence of her conduct, and exhorted her by every tie of juſtice, honour, and diſcretion, to ſet about a reformation.

"Why, what can I do?" cried Mrs. Harrel, impatiently, "one muſt live a little like other people. You would not have me be ſtared at, I ſuppoſe; and I am ſure I don't know what I do that every body elſe does not do too."

"But were it not better," ſaid Cecilia, with more energy, "to think leſs of *other people*, and more of *yourſelf?* to conſult your own fortune, and your own ſituation in life, inſtead of being blindly guided by thoſe of *other people?* If, indeed, *other people* would be reſponſible for your loſſes, for the diminution of your wealth, and for the diſorder of your affairs, then might you rationally make

their

their way of life the example of yours: but you cannot flatter yourſelf ſuch will be the caſe; you know better; your loſſes, your diminiſhed fortune, your embarraſſed circumſtances will be all your own! pitied, perhaps, by ſome, but blamed by more, and aſſiſted by none!"

"Good Lord, Miſs Beverley!" cried Mrs. Harrel, ſtarting, "you talk juſt as if we were ruined!"

"I mean not that," replied Cecilia, "but I would fain, by pointing out your danger, prevail with you to prevent in time ſo dreadful a cataſtrophe."

Mrs. Harrel, more affronted than alarmed, heard this anſwer with much diſpleaſure, and after a ſullen heſitation, peevishly ſaid, "I muſt own I don't take it very kind of you to ſay ſuch frightful things to me: I am ſure we only live like the reſt of the world, and I don't ſee why a man of Mr. Harrel's fortune ſhould live any worſe. As to his having now and then a little debt or two, it is nothing but what every body elſe has. You only think it ſo odd, becauſe you a'n't uſed to it: but you are quite miſtaken if you ſuppoſe he does not mean to pay, for he told me this morning, that as ſoon as ever he receives his rents, he intends to diſcharge every bill he has in the world."

"I am very glad to hear it," anſwered Cecilia, "and I heartily wish he may have the

the reſolution to adhere to his purpoſe. I feared you would think me impertinent, but you do worſe in believing me unkind: friendſhip and good-will could alone have induced me to hazard what I have ſaid to you. I muſt, however, have done; though I cannot forbear adding, that I hope what has already paſſed will ſometimes recur to you."

They then ſeparated; Mrs. Harrel half angry at remonſtrances ſhe thought only cenſorious, and Cecilia offended at her pettiſhneſs and folly, though grieved at her blindneſs.

She was ſoon, however, recompenſed for this vexation by a viſit from Mrs. Delvile, who, finding her alone, ſat with her ſome time, and by her ſpirit, underſtanding, and elegance, diſſipated all her chagrin.

From another circumſtance, alſo, ſhe received much pleaſure, though a little perplexity; Mr. Arnott brought her word that Mr. Belfield, almoſt quite well, had actually left his lodgings, and was gone into the country.

She now half ſuſpected that the account of his illneſs given her by young Delvile, was merely the effect of his curioſity to diſcover her ſentiments of him; yet when ſhe conſidered how foreign to his character appeared every ſpecies of artifice, ſhe exculpated him from the deſign, and concluded that the impatient ſpirit of Belfield had hur-

ried

ried him away, when really unfit for travelling. She had no means, however, to hear more of him now he had quitted the town, and therefore, though uneasy, she was compelled to be patient.

In the evening she had again a visit from Mr. Monckton, who, though he was now acquainted how much she was at home, had the forbearance to avoid making frequent use of that knowledge, that his attendance might escape observation.

Cecilia, as usual, spoke to him of all her affairs with the utmost openness; and as her mind was now chiefly occupied by her apprehensions for the Harrels, she communicated to him the extravagance of which they were guilty, and hinted at the distress that from time to time it occasioned; but the assistance she had afforded them her own delicacy prevented her mentioning.

Mr. Monckton scrupled not from this account instantly to pronounce Harrel a *ruined man*; and thinking Cecilia, from her connection with him, in much danger of being involved in his future difficulties, he most earnestly exhorted her to suffer no inducement to prevail with her to advance him any money, confidently affirming she would have little chance of being ever repaid.

Cecilia listened to this charge with much alarm, but readily promised future circumspection. She confessed to him the conference

ference ſhe had had in the morning with Mrs. Harrel, and after lamenting her determined neglect of her affairs, ſhe added, "I cannot but own that my eſteem for her, even more than my affection, has leſſened almoſt every day ſince I have been in her houſe; but this morning, when I ventured to ſpeak to her with earneſtneſs, I found her powers of reaſoning ſo weak, and her infatuation to luxury and expence ſo ſtrong, that I have ever ſince felt aſhamed of my own want of diſcernment, in having formerly ſelected her for my friend."

"When you gave her that title," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "you had little choice in your power; her ſweetneſs and good nature attracted you; childhood is never troubled with foreſight, and youth is ſeldom difficult: ſhe was lively and pleaſing, you were generous and affectionate; your acquaintance with her was formed while you were yet too young to know your own worth; your fondneſs of her grew from habit; and before the inferiority of her parts had weakened your regard, by offending your judgment, her early marriage ſeparated you from her entirely. But now you meet again the ſcene is altered; three years of abſence ſpent in the cultivation of an underſtanding naturally of the firſt order, by encreaſing your wiſdom, has made you more faſtidious; while the ſame time ſpent by her in mere idleneſs and

ſhew,

ſhew, has hurt her diſpoſition, without adding to her knowledge, and robbed her of her natural excellencies, without enriching her with acquired ones. You ſee her now with impartiality, for you ſee her almoſt as a ſtranger, and all thoſe deficiencies which retirement and inexperience had formerly concealed, her vanity, and her ſuperficial acquaintance with the world, have now rendered glaring. But folly weakens all hands; remember, therefore, if you would form a ſolid friendſhip, to conſult not only the heart but the head, not only the temper, but the underſtanding."

"Well, then," ſaid Cecilia, "at leaſt it muſt be confeſſed I have judiciouſly choſen you."

"You have, indeed, done me the higheſt honour," he anſwered.

They then talked of Belfield, and Mr. Monckton confirmed the account of Mr. Arnott, that he had left London in good health. After which, he enquired if ſhe had ſeen any thing more of the Delviles?

"Yes," ſaid Cecilia, "Mrs. Delvile called upon me this morning. She is a delightful woman; I am ſorry you know her not enough to do her juſtice."

"Is ſhe civil to you?"

"Civil? ſhe is all kindneſs!"

"Then depend upon it ſhe has ſomething in view: whenever that is not the caſe, ſhe is

all

all insolence. "And Mr. Delville—pray what do you think of him?"

"O, I think him insufferable! and I cannot sufficiently thank you for that timely caution which prevented my change of habitation. I would not live under the same roof with him for the world!"

"Well, and do you not now begin also to see the son properly?"

"Properly? I don't understand you."

"Why as the very son of such parents, haughty and impertinent."

"No, indeed; he has not the smallest resemblance of his father, and if he resembles his mother, it is only what every one must with who impartially sees her."

"You know not that family. But how, indeed, should you, when they are in a combination to prevent your getting that knowledge? They have all their designs upon you, and if you are not carefully upon your guard, you will be the dupe to them."

"What can you possibly mean?"

"Nothing but what every body else must immediately see; they have a great share of pride, and a small one of wealth; you seem by fortune to be flung in their way, and doubtless they mean not to neglect so inviting an opportunity of repairing their estates."

"Indeed you are mistaken, I am certain they have *no such* intention: on the contrary,

they

they all even teazingly perſiſt in thinking me already engaged elſewhere."

She then gave him a hiſtory of their ſeveral ſuſpicions. "The impertinence of report," ſhe added, "has ſo much convinced them that Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Belfield fought merely as rivals, that I can only clear myſelf of partiality for one of them, to have it inſtantly concluded I feel it for the other. And, far from ſeeming hurt that I appear to be diſpoſed of, Mr. Delvile openly ſeconds the pretenſions of Sir Robert, and his ſon officiouſly perſuades me that I am already Mr. Belfield's."

"Tricks, nothing but tricks to diſcover your real ſituation."

He then gave her ſome general cautions to be upon her guard againſt their artifices, and changing the ſubject, talked, for the reſt of his viſit, upon matters of general entertainment.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

An Evasion.

CECILIA now for about a fortnight paſſed her time without incident: the Harrels continued their accuſtomed diſſipation, Sir Robert Floyer, without even ſeeking a private conference, perſevered in his attentions, and Mr. Arnott, though ſtill ſilent and humble, ſeemed only to live by the pleaſure of beholding her. She ſpent two whole days with Mrs. Delvile, both of which ſerved to confirm her admiration of that lady and of her ſon; and ſhe joined the parties of the Harrels, or ſtayed quietly at home, according to her ſpirits and inclinations: while ſhe was viſited by Mr. Monckton often enough to ſatisfy him with her proceedings, yet too ſeldom to betray either to herſelf or to the world any ſuſpicion of his deſigns.

Her 200*l.* however, which was to have been returned at the end of the firſt week, though a fortnight had now elapſed, had not even been mentioned: ſhe began to grow very impatient, but not knowing what courſe to purſue, and wanting courage to remind Mr. Harrel of his promiſe, ſhe ſtill waited the performance of it without ſpeaking.

At this time, preparations were making in the family for removing to Violet Bank to ſpend the Eaſter holidays: but Cecilia, who was too much grieved at ſuch perpetual encreaſe of unneceſſary expences to have any enjoyment in new proſpects of entertainment, had at preſent ſome buſineſs of her own which gave her full employment.

The poor carpenter, whoſe family ſhe had taken under her protection, was juſt dead, and, as ſoon as the laſt duties had been paid him, ſhe ſent for his widow, and after trying to conſole her for the loſs ſhe had ſuffered, aſſured her ſhe was immediately ready to fulfil the engagement into which ſhe had entered, of aſſiſting her to undertake ſome better method of procuring a livelihood; and therefore deſired to know in what manner ſhe could ſerve her, and what ſhe thought herſelf able to do.

The good woman, pouring forth thanks and praiſes innumerable, anſwered, that ſhe had a Couſin, who had offered, for a certain premium, to take her into partnerſhip in a ſmall haberdaſher's ſhop. "But then, madam," continued ſhe, "it's quite morally impoſſible I ſhould raiſe ſuch a ſum, or elſe, to be ſure, ſuch a ſhop as that, now I am grown ſo poorly, would be quite a heaven upon earth to me: for my ſtrength, madam, is almoſt all gone away, and when I do any hard work, it's quite a piteous ſight to ſee me,

me, for I am all in a tremble after it, juſt as if I had an ague, and yet all the time my hands, madam, will be burning like a coal!"

"You have indeed been overworked," ſaid Cecilia, "and it is high time your feeble frame ſhould have ſome reſt. What is the ſum your couſin demands?"

"O madam, more than I ſhould be able to get together in all my life! for earn what I will, it goes as faſt as it comes, becauſe there's many mouths, and ſmall pay, and two of the little ones that can't help at all; —and there's no Billy, madam, to work for us now!"

"But tell me, what is the ſum?"

"Sixty pound, madam."

"You ſhall have it!" cried the generous Cecilia, "if the ſituation will make you happy, I will give it you myſelf."

The poor woman wept her thanks, and was long before ſhe could ſufficiently compoſe herſelf to anſwer the farther queſtions of Cecilia, who next enquired what could be done with the children? Mrs. Hill, however, hitherto hopeleſs of ſuch a proviſion for herſelf, had for them formed no plan. She told her, therefore, to go to her couſin, and conſult upon this ſubject, as well as to make preparations for her own removal.

The arrangement of this buſineſs now became her favourite occupation. She went herſelf to the ſhop, which was a very ſmall one

one in Fetter-lane, and ſpoke with Mrs. Roberts, the couſin; who agreed to take the eldeſt girl, now ſixteen years of age, by way of helper; but ſaid ſhe had room for no other: however, upon Cecilia's offering to raiſe the premium, ſhe conſented that the two little children ſhould alſo live in the houſe, where they might be under the care of their mother and ſiſter.

There were ſtill two others to be diſpoſed of; but as no immediate method of providing for them occurred to Cecilia, ſhe determined, for the preſent, to place them in ſome cheap ſchool, where they might be taught plain work, which could not but prove a uſeful qualification for whatever ſort of buſineſs they might hereafter attempt.

Her plan was to beſtow upon Mrs. Hill and her children 100*l.* by way of putting them all into a decent way of living; and then, from time to time, to make them ſuch ſmall preſents as their future exigencies or changes of ſituation might require.

Now, therefore, payment from Mr. Harrel became immediately neceſſary, for ſhe had only 50*l.* of the 600*l.* ſhe had taken up in her own poſſeſſion, and her cuſtomary allowance was already ſo appropriated that ſhe could make from it no conſiderable deduction.

There is nothing in the ſight of laborious indigence ſo affecting and ſo reſpectable,

table, that it renders diſſipation peculiarly contemptible, and doubles the odium of extravagance; every time Cecilia ſaw this poor family, her averſion to the conduct and the principles of Mr. Harrel encreaſed, while her delicacy of ſhocking or ſhaming him diminiſhed, and ſhe ſoon acquired for them what ſhe had failed to acquire for herſelf, the ſpirit and reſolution to claim her debt.

One morning, therefore, as he was quitting the breakfaſt-room, ſhe haſtily aroſe, and following, begged to have a moment's diſcourſe with him. They went together to the library, and after ſome apologies, and much heſitation, ſhe told him ſhe fancied he had forgotten the 200*l.* which ſhe had lent him.

"The 200*l.*" cried he; "O, ay, true! —I proteſt it had eſcaped me. Well, but you don't want it immediately?"

"Indeed I do, if you can conveniently ſpare it."

"O yes, certainly! — without the leaſt doubt! —Though now I think of it—it's extremely unlucky, but really juſt at this time—why did not you put me in mind of it before?"

"I hoped you would have remembered it yourſelf?"

"I could have paid you two days ago extremely well; —however, you ſhall certainly have it very ſoon, that you may de-

pend upon, and a day or two can make no great difference to you."

He then wiſhed her good morning, and left her.

Cecilia, very much provoked, regretted that ſhe had ever lent it at all, and determined for the future ſtrictly to follow the advice of Mr. Monckton in truſting him no more.

Two or three days paſſed on, but ſtill no notice was taken either of the payment or of the debt. She then reſolved to renew her application, and be more ſerious and more urgent with him; but ſhe found, to her utter ſurpriſe, this was not in her power, and that though ſhe lived under the ſame roof with him, ſhe had no opportunity to enforce her claim. Mr. Harrel, whenever ſhe deſired to ſpeak with him, proteſted he was ſo much hurried he had not a moment to ſpare: and even when, tired of his excuſes, ſhe purſued him out of the room, he only quickened his ſpeed, ſmiling, however, and bowing, and calling out, "I am vaſtly ſorry, but I am ſo late now I cannot ſtop an inſtant; however, as ſoon as I come back, I ſhall be wholly at your command."

When he came back, however, Sir Robert Floyer, or ſome other gentleman, was ſure to be with him, and the difficulties of obtaining an audience were ſure to be encreaſed. And by this method, which he conſtantly

conſtantly practiſed, of avoiding any private converſation, he fruſtrated all her ſchemes of remonſtrating upon his delay, ſince her reſentment, however great, could never urge her to the indelicacy of dunning him in preſence of a third perſon.

She was now much perplexed herſelf how to put into execution her plan for the Hills: ſhe knew it would be as vain to apply for money to Mr. Briggs, as for payment to Mr. Harrel. Her word, however, had been given, and her word ſhe held ſacred: ſhe reſolved, therefore, for the preſent, to beſtow upon them the 50*l.* ſhe ſtill retained, and, if the reſt ſhould be neceſſary before ſhe became of age, to ſpare it, however inconveniently, from her private allowance, which, by the will of her uncle, was 500*l.* a year, 250*l.* of which Mr. Harrel received for her board and accommodations.

Having ſettled this matter in her own mind, ſhe went to the lodging of Mrs. Hill, in order to conclude the affair. She found her and all her children, except the youngeſt, hard at work, and their honeſt induſtry ſo much ſtrengthened her compaſſion, that her wiſhes for ſerving them grew every inſtant more liberal.

Mrs. Hill readily undertook to make her couſin accept half the premium for the preſent, which would ſuffice to fix her, with three of her children, in the ſhop: Cecilia

then went with her to Fetter-Lane, and there drawing up herſelf an agreement for their entering into partnerſhip, ſhe made each of them ſign it and take a copy, and kept a third in her own poſſeſſion: after which, ſhe gave a promiſſory note to Mrs. Roberts for the reſt of the money.

She preſented Mrs. Hill, alſo, with 10*l.* to clothe them all decently, and enable her to ſend two of the children to ſchool; and aſſured her that ſhe would herſelf pay for their board and inſtruction, till ſhe ſhould be eſtabliſhed in her buſineſs, and have power ſo ſave money for that purpoſe.

She then put herſelf into a chair to return home, followed by the prayers and bleſſings of the whole family.

CHAP. III.

An Adventure.

NEVER had the heart of Cecilia felt ſo light, ſo gay, ſo glowing, as after the tranſaction of this affair: her life had never appeared to her ſo important, nor her wealth ſo valuable. To ſee five helpleſs children provided

provided for by herſelf, reſcued from the extremes of penury and wretchedneſs, and put in a way to become uſeful to ſociety, and comfortable to themſelves; to behold their feeble mother, ſnatched from the hardſhip of that labour which, over-powering her ſtrength, had almoſt deſtroyed her exiſtence, now placed in a ſituation where a competent maintenance might be earned without fatigue, and the remnant of her days paſs in eaſy employment—to view ſuch ſights, and have power to ſay, "*Theſe deeds are mine!*" what, to a diſpoſition fraught with tenderneſs and benevolence, could give purer ſelf-applauſe, or more exquiſite ſatisfaction?

Such were the pleaſures which regaled the reflections of Cecilia, when, in her way home, having got out of her chair to walk through the upper part of Oxford-Street, ſhe was ſuddenly met by the old gentleman whoſe emphatical addreſſes to her had ſo much excited her aſtoniſhment.

He was paſſing quick on, but ſtopping the moment he perceived her, he ſternly called out, "Are you proud? are you callous? are you hard of heart ſo ſoon?"

"Put me, if you pleaſe, to ſome trial!" cried Cecilia, with the virtuous courage of a ſelf-acquitting conſcience.

"I already have!" returned he, indignantly, "and already I have found you faulty!"

"I am ſorry to hear it," ſaid the amazed Cecilia; "but at leaſt I hope you will tell me in what?"

"You refuſed me admittance," he anſwered, "yet I was your friend, yet I was willing to prolong the term of your genuine tranquillity! I pointed out to you a method of preſerving peace with your own ſoul; I came to you in behalf of the poor, and inſtructed you how to merit their prayers; you heard me, you were ſuſceptible, you complied! I meant to have repeated the leſſon, to have turned your whole heart to compaſſion, and to have taught you the ſad duties of ſympathiſing humanity. For this purpoſe I called again, but again I was not admitted! Short was the period of my abſence, yet long enough for the completion of your downfal!"

"Good heaven," cried Cecilia, "how dreadful is this language! when have you called, Sir? I never heard you had been at the houſe. Far from refuſing you admittance, I wiſhed to ſee you."

"Indeed?" cried he, with ſome ſoftneſs, "and are you, in truth, not proud? not callous? not hard of heart? Follow me, then, and viſit the humble and the poor, follow me, and give comfort to the fallen and dejected!"

At this invitation, however deſirous to do good, Cecilia ſtarted; the ſtrangeneſs of the

the inviter, his ſlightneſs, his authoritative manner, and the uncertainty whither or to whom he might carry her, made her fearful of proceeding: yet a benevolent curioſity to ſee as well as ſerve the objects of his recommendation, joined to the eagerneſs of youthful integrity to clear her own character from the aſperſion of hard-heartedneſs, ſoon conquered her irreſolution, and, making a ſign to her ſervant to keep near her, ſhe followed as her conductor led.

He went on ſilently and ſolemnly till he came to Swallow-Street, then turning into it, he ſtopt at a ſmall and mean-looking houſe, knocked at the door, and without aſking any queſtion of the man who opened it, beckoned her to come after him, and haſtened up ſome narrow winding ſtairs.

Cecilia again heſitated; but when ſhe recollected that this old man, though little known, was frequently ſeen, and though with few people acquainted, was by many perſonally recognized, ſhe thought it impoſſible he could mean her any injury. She ordered her ſervant, however, to come in, and bid him keep walking up and down the ſtairs till ſhe returned to him. And then ſhe obeyed the directions of her guide.

He proceeded till he came to the ſecond floor, then, again beckoning her to follow him, he opened a door, and entered a ſmall and very meanly furniſhed apartment.

And here, to her infinite aſtoniſhment, ſhe perceived, employed in waſhing ſome china, a very lovely young woman, genteelly dreſſed, and appearing hardly ſeventeen years of age.

The moment they came in, with evident marks of confuſion, ſhe inſtantly gave over her work, haſtily putting the baſon ſhe was waſhing upon the table, and endeavouring to hide the towel with which ſhe was wiping it, behind her chair.

The old gentleman, advancing to her with quickneſs, ſaid, "How is he now? is he better? will he live?"

"Heaven forbid he ſhould not!" anſwered the young woman with emotion, "but, indeed, he is no better!"

"Look here," ſaid he pointing to Cecilia, "I have brought you one who has power to ſerve you, and to relieve your diſtreſs: one who is rolling in affluence, a ſtranger to ill, a novice in the world;—unſkilled in the miſeries ſhe is yet to endure, unconſcious of the depravity into which ſhe is to ſink!—Receive her benefactions while yet ſhe is untainted, ſatisfied that while ſhe aids you, ſhe is bleſſing herſelf!"

The young woman, bluſhing and abaſhed, ſaid, "You are very good to me, Sir, but there is no occaſion—there is no need—I have not any neceſſity—I am far from being ſo very much in want—"

"Poor ſimple ſoul!" interrupted the old man,

man, stand! art thou ashamed of poverty? Guard, guard thyself from other shames, and the wealthiest may envy thee! Tell here thy story, plainly, roundly, truly; abate nothing of thy indigence, repress nothing of her liberality. The poor, not impoverished by their own guilt, are equals of the affluent, not enriched by their own virtue. Come, then, and let me present ye to each other! young as ye both are, with many years and many sorrows to encounter, lighten the burthen of each other's cares, by the heart-soothing exchange of gratitude for beneficence!"

He then took a hand of each, and joining them between his own, "*You*," he continued, "who though rich, are not hardened, and *you*, who though poor, are not debased, why should ye not love, why should ye not cherish each other? The afflictions of life are tedious, its joys are evanescent; ye are now both young, and with little to enjoy, will find much to suffer. Ye are both, too, I believe, innocent—Oh could ye always remain so!—Cherubs were ye then, and the sons of men might worship you!"

He stopt, checked by his own rising emotion; but soon resuming his usual austerity, "Such, however," he continued, "is not the condition of humanity; in pity, therefore, to the evils impending over both, be kind to each other! I leave you together,

and to your mutual tenderneſs I recommend you!"

Then, turning particularly to Cecilia, "Diſdain not," he ſaid, "to conſole the depreſſed; look upon her without ſcorn, converſe with her without contempt: like you, ſhe is an orphan, though not, like you, an Heireſs;—like her you are fatherleſs, though not like her friendleſs! If *ſhe* is awaited by the temptations of adverſity, *you*, alſo, are ſurrounded by the corruptions of proſperity. Your fall is moſt probable, her's moſt excuſable;—commiſerate *her* therefore now,—by and by ſhe may commiſerate *you*?"

And with theſe words he left the room.

A total ſilence for ſome time ſucceeded his departure: Cecilia found it difficult to recover from the ſurpriſe into which ſhe had been thrown ſufficiently for ſpeech; in following her extraordinary director, her imagination had painted to her a ſcene ſuch as ſhe had ſo lately quitted, and prepared her to behold ſome family in diſtreſs, ſome helpleſs creature in ſickneſs, or ſome children in want; but of theſe to ſee none, to meet but one perſon, and that one fair, young, and delicate,—an introduction ſo ſingular to an object ſo unthought of, deprived her of all power but that of ſhewing her amazement.

Mean while the young woman looked ſcarcely leſs ſurpriſed, and infinitely more embarraſſed. She ſurveyed her apartment,

with

with vexation, and her guest with confusion; she had listened to the exhortation of the old man with visible uneasiness, and now he was gone, seemed overwhelmed with shame and chagrin.

Cecilia, who in observing these emotions felt both her curiosity and her compassion encrease, pressed her hand as she parted with it, and, when a little recovered, said, "You must think this a strange intrusion; but the gentleman who brought me hither is perhaps so well known to you, as to make his singularities plead with you their own apology."

"No, indeed, madam," she answered, bashfully, "he is very little known to me; but he is very good, and very desirous to do me service:—not but what I believe he thinks me much worse off than I really am, for, I assure you, madam, whatever he has said, I am not ill off at all—hardly."

The various doubts to her disadvantage which had at first, from her uncommon situation, arisen in the mind of Cecilia, this anxiety to disguise, not display her distress, considerably, removed, since it cleared her of all suspicion of seeking by artifice and imposition to play upon her feelings.

With a gentleness, therefore, the most soothing, she replied, "I should by no means have broken in upon you thus unexpectedly, if I had not concluded my conductor had some right to bring me. However, since we

are actually met, let us remember his injunctions, and endeavour not to part, till, by a mutual exchange of good-will, each has added a friend to the other."

"You are condescending, indeed, madam," answered the young woman, with an air the most humble, "looking as you look, to talk of a friend when you come to such a place as this! up two pair of stairs! no furniture! no servant! every thing in such disorder!—indeed I wonder at Mr. Albany! he should not —— but he thinks every body's affairs may be made public, and does not care what he tells, nor who hears him;—he knows not the pain he gives, nor the mischief he may do."

"I am very much concerned," cried Cecilia, more and more surprised at all she heard, "to find I have been thus instrumental to distressing you. I was ignorant whither I was coming, and followed him, believe me, neither from curiosity nor inclination, but simply because I knew not how to refuse him. He is gone, however, and I will therefore relieve you by going too: but permit me to leave behind me a small testimony that the intention of my coming was not mere impertinence."

She then took out her purse; but the young woman, starting back with a look of resentful mortification, exclaimed, "No, *madam!* you are quite mistaken; pray put up

up your purſe; I am no beggar! Mr. Albany has miſrepreſented me, if he has told you I am."

Cecilia, mortified in her turn at this unexpected rejection of an offer ſhe had thought herſelf invited to make, ſtood ſome moments ſilent; and then ſaid, "I am far from meaning to offend you, and I ſincerely beg your pardon if I have miſunderſtood the charge juſt now given to me."

"I have nothing to pardon, madam," ſaid ſhe more calmly, "except, indeed, to Mr. Albany; and to him, 'tis of no uſe to be angry, for he minds not what I ſay; he is very good, but he is very ſtrange, for he thinks the whole world made to live in common, and that every one who is poor ſhould aſk, and every one who is rich ſhould give: he does not know that there are many who would rather ſtarve."

"And are you," ſaid Cecilia, half-ſmiling, "of that number?"

"No, indeed, madam! I have not ſo much greatneſs of mind. But thoſe to whom I belong have more fortitude and higher ſpirit. I wiſh I could imitate them!"

Struck with the candour and ſimplicity of this ſpeech, Cecilia now felt a warm deſire to ſerve her, and taking her hand, ſaid, "Forgive me; but though I ſee you wiſh me gone, I know not how to leave you: recollect, therefore, the charge that has been

given

given to us both, and if you refuſe my aſſiſtance one way, point out to me in what other I may offer it."

"You are very kind, madam," ſhe anſwered, "and I dare ſay you are very good; I am ſure you look ſo at leaſt. But I want nothing; I do very well, and I have hopes of doing better. Mr. Albany is too impatient. He knows, indeed, that I am not extremely rich, but he is much to blame if he ſuppoſes me therefore an object of charity, and thinks me ſo mean as to receive money from a ſtranger."

"I am truly ſorry," cried Cecilia, "for the error I have committed, but you muſt ſuffer me to make my peace with you before we part; yet, till I am better known to you, I am fearful of propoſing terms. Perhaps you will permit me to leave you my direction, and do me the favour to call upon me yourſelf?"

"O no, madam! I have a ſick relation whom I cannot leave: and indeed, if he were well, he would not like to have me make an acquaintance while I am in this place."

"I hope you are not his only nurſe? I am ſure you do not look able to bear ſuch fatigue. Has he a phyſician? Is he properly attended?"

"No, madam; he has no phyſician, and no attendance at all!"

"And

"And is it poſſible that in ſuch a ſituation you can refuſe to be aſſiſted? Surely you ſhould accept ſome help for him, if not for yourſelf."

"But what will that ſignify, when, if I do, he will not make uſe of it? and when he had a thouſand and a thouſand times rather die, than let any one know he is in want?"

"Take it, then, unknown to him; ſerve him without acquainting him you ſerve him. Surely you would not ſuffer him to periſh without aid?"

"Heaven forbid! But what can I do? I am under his command, madam, not he under mine?"

"Is he your father?——Pardon my queſtion, but your youth ſeems much to want ſuch a protector."

"No, madam, I have no father! I was happier when I had! He is my brother."

"And what is his illneſs?"

"A fever."

"A fever, and without a phyſician! Are you ſure, too, it is not infectious?"

"O yes, too ſure!"

"Too ſure? how ſo?"

"Becauſe I know too well the occaſion of it!"

"And what is the occaſion?" cried Cecilia, again taking her hand, "pray truſt me; indeed you ſhall not repent your confi-

dence.

dence. Your reſerve hitherto has only raiſed you in my eſteem, but do not carry it ſo far as to mortify me by a total rejection of my good offices."

"Ah, madam!" ſaid the young woman, ſighing, "you ought to be good, I am ſure, for you will draw all out of me by ſuch kindneſs as this; the occaſion was a neglected wound, never properly healed."

"A wound? is he in the army?"

"No,—he was ſhot though the ſide in a duel."

"In a duel?" exclaimed Cecilia, "pray, what is his name?"

"O that I muſt not tell you! his name is a great ſecret now, while he is in this poor place, for I know he had almoſt rather never ſee the light again than have it known."

"Surely, ſurely," cried Cecilia, with much emotion, "he cannot—I hope he cannot be Mr. Belfield?"

"Ah Heaven!" cried the young woman, ſcreaming, "do you know him?"

Here, in mutual aſtoniſhment, they looked at each other.

"You are then," ſaid Cecilia, "the ſiſter of Mr. Belfield? and Mr. Belfield, is thus ſick, his wound is not yet healed,—and he is without help!"

"And who, madam, are *you*?" cried ſhe, "and how is it you know him?"

"My name is Beverley."

"Ah!"

"Ah!" exclaimed he again, "I fear I have done nothing but mischief! I know very well who you are now, madam; but if my brother discovers that I have betrayed him, he will take it very unkind, and perhaps never forgive me."

"Be not alarmed," cried Cecilia; "rest assured he shall never know it. Is he not now in the country?"

"No, madam, he is now in the very next room."

"But what is become of the surgeon who used to attend him, and why does he not still visit him?"

"It is in vain, now, to hide any thing from you; my brother deceived him, and said he was going out of town merely to get rid of him."

"And what could induce him to act so strangely?"

"A reason which you, madam, I hope, will never know, Poverty!—he would not run up a bill he could not pay."

"Good Heaven!—but what can be done for him? he must not be suffered to linger thus; we must contrive some method of relieving and assisting him, whether he will consent or not."

"I fear that will not be possible. One of his friends has already found him out, and has written him the kindest letter, but he would

would not answer it, and would not see him, and was only fretted and angry."

"Well," said Cecilia, "I will not keep you longer, lest he should be alarmed by your absence. To-morrow morning, with your leave, I will call upon you again, and then I hope you will permit me to make some effort to assist you."

"If it only depended upon me, madam," she answered, "now I have the honour to know who you are, I believe I should not make much scruple; for I was not brought up to notions so high as my brother. Ah! happy had it been for him, for me, for all his family, if he had not had them neither!"

Cecilia then repeated her expressions of comfort and kindness, and took her leave.

This little adventure gave her infinite concern; all the horror which the duel had originally occasioned her, again returned; she accused herself with much bitterness for having brought it on; and finding that Mr. Belfield was so cruelly a sufferer both in his health and his affairs, she thought it incumbent upon her to relieve him to the utmost of her ability.

His sister, too, had extremely interested her; her youth, and the uncommon artlessness of her conversation, added to her melancholy situation, and the loveliness of her person, excited in her a desire to serve, and an

an inclination to love her, and ſhe determined, if ſhe found her as deſerving as ſhe ſeemed engaging, not only to aſſiſt her at preſent, but, if her diſtreſſes continued, to receive her into her own houſe in future.

Again ſhe regretted the undue detention of her 200*l.* What ſhe now had to ſpare was extremely inadequate to what ſhe now wiſhed to beſtow, and ſhe looked forward to the concluſion of her minority with encreaſing eagerneſs. The generous and elegant plan of life ſhe then intended to purſue, daily gained ground in her imagination, and credit in her opinion.

CHAP. IV.

A Man of Genius.

THE next morning, as ſoon as breakfaſt was over, Cecilia went in a chair to Swallow-Street; ſhe enquired for Miſs Belfield, and was told to go up ſtairs: but what was her amazement to meet, juſt coming out of the room into which ſhe was entering, young Delvile!

They both ſtarted, and Cecilia, from the ſeeming ſtrangeneſs of her ſituation, felt a con-

confuſion with which ſhe had hitherto been unacquainted. But Delvile, preſently recovering from his ſurpriſe, ſaid to her, with an expreſſive ſmile, "How good is Miſs Beverley thus to viſit the ſick! and how much better might I have had the pleaſure of ſeeing Mr. Belfield, had I but, by preſcience, known her deſign, and deferred my own enquiries till he had been revived by her's!"

And then bowing, and wiſhing her good morning, he glided paſt her.

Cecilia, notwithſtanding the openneſs and purity of her intentions, was ſo much diſconcerted by this unexpected meeting, and pointed ſpeech, that ſhe had not the preſence of mind to call him back and clear herſelf; and the various interrogatories and railleries which had already paſſed between them upon the ſubject of Mr. Belfield, made her ſuppoſe that what he had formerly ſuſpected he would now think confirmed, and conclude that all her aſſertions of indifference, proceeded merely from that readineſs at hypocriſy upon particular ſubjects, of which he had openly accuſed her whole ſex.

This circumſtance and this apprehenſion took from her for a while all intereſt in the errand upon which ſhe came; but the benevolence of her heart ſoon brought it back, when, upon going into the room, ſhe ſaw her new favourite in tears.

"What is the matter!", cried ſhe, tenderly;

derly; "no new affliction I hope has happened? Your brother is not worſe?"

"No, madam, he is much the ſame; I was not crying for him."

"For what then? tell me, acquaint me with your ſorrows, and aſſure yourſelf you tell them to a friend."

"I was crying, madam, to find ſo much goodneſs in the world, when I thought there was ſo little! to find I have ſome chance of being again happy, when I thought I was miſerable for ever! Two whole years have I ſpent in nothing but unhappineſs, and I thought there was nothing elſe to be had; but yeſterday, madam, brought me *you*, with every promiſe of nobleneſs and protection; and to-day a friend of my brother's has behaved ſo generouſly, that even my brother has liſtened to him, and almoſt conſented to be obliged to him!"

"And have you already known ſo much ſorrow," ſaid Cecilia, "that this little dawn of proſperity ſhould wholly overpower your ſpirits? Gentle, amiable girl! may the future recompenſe you for the paſt, and may Mr. Albany's kind wiſhes be fulfilled in the reciprocation of our comfort and affliction."

They then entered into a converſation which the ſweetneſs of Cecilia, and the gratitude of Miſs Belfield, ſoon rendered intereſting, friendly and unreſerved: and in a very ſhort time, whatever was eſſential in the

ſtory

ſtory or ſituation of the latter was fully communicated. She gave, however, a charge the moſt earneſt, that her brother ſhould never be acquainted with the confidence ſhe had made.

Her father, who had been dead only two years, was a linen-draper in the city; he had ſix daughters, of whom herſelf was the youngeſt, and only one ſon. This ſon, Mr. Belfield, was alike the darling of his father, mother, and ſiſters: he was brought up at Eaton, no expence was ſpared in his education, nothing was denied that could make him happy. With an excellent underſtanding he had uncommon quickneſs of parts, and his progreſs in his ſtudies were rapid and honourable: his father, though he always meant him for his ſucceſſor in his buſineſs, heard of his improvements with rapture, often ſaying, "My boy will be the ornament of the city, he will be the beſt ſcholar in any ſhop in London."

He was ſoon, however, taught another leſſon; when, at the age of ſixteen, he returned home, and was placed in the ſhop, inſtead of applying his talents as his father had expected, to trade, he both deſpiſed and abhorred the name of it; when ſerious, treating it with contempt, when gay, with deriſion.

He was ſeized, alſo, with a moſt ardent *deſire to finiſh* his education, like thoſe of his

his ſchool-fellows who let Eaton at the ſame time at one of the Univerſities; and, after many difficulties, this petition, at the interceſſion of his mother, was granted, old Mr. Belfield telling him he hoped a little more learning would give him a little more ſenſe, and that when he became a *finiſhed ſtudent*, he would not only know the true value of buſineſs, but underſtand how to get money, and make a bargain, better than any man whatſoever within Temple-Bar.

Theſe expectations, equally ſhort-ſighted, were alſo equally fallacious with the former: the ſon again returned, and returned, as his father had hoped, a *finiſhed ſtudent*; but, far from being more tractable, or better diſpoſed for application to trade, his averſion to it now was more ſtubborn, and his oppoſition more hardy than ever. The young men of faſhion with whom he had formed friendſhips at ſchool, or at the univerſity, and with whom, from the indulgence of his father, he was always able to vie in expence, and from the indulgence of Nature to excel in capacity, earneſtly ſought the continuance of his acquaintance, and courted and coveted the pleaſure of his converſation: but though he was now totally diſqualified for any other ſociety, he loſt all delight in their favour from the fear they ſhould diſcover his abode, and ſedulouſly endeavoured to avoid even occaſionally meeting them, leſt any of

his

his family ſhould at the ſame time approach him: for of his family, though wealthy, worthy, and independent, he was now ſo utterly aſhamed, that the mortification the moſt cruel he could receive, was to be aſked his addreſs, or told he ſhould be viſited.

Tired, at length, of evading the enquiries made by ſome, and forcing faint laughs at the detection made by others, he privately took a lodging at the weſt end of the town, to which he thenceforward directed all his friends, and where, under various pretences, he contrived to ſpend the greateſt part of his time.

In all his expenſive deceits and frolics, his mother was his never-failing confident and aſſiſtant; for when ſhe heard that the companions of her ſon were men of faſhion, ſome born to titles, others deſtined to high ſtations, ſhe concluded he was in the certain road to honour and profit, and frequently diſtreſſed herſelf, without ever repining, in order to enable him to preſerve upon equal terms, connections which ſhe believed ſo conducive to his future grandeur.

In this wild and unſettled manner he paſſed ſome time, ſtruggling inceſſantly againſt the authority of his father, privately abetted by his mother, and conſtantly aided and admired by his ſiſters: till, ſick of ſo deſultory a way of life, he entered himſelf a volunteer *in the army.*

How

How ſoon he grew tired of this change has already been related *, as well as his reconciliation with his father, and his becoming a ſtudent at the Temple: for the father now grew as weary of oppoſing, as the young man of being oppoſed.

Here, for two or three years, he lived in happineſs uninterrupted: he extended his acquaintance among the great, by whom he was no ſooner known than careſſed and admired, and he frequently viſited his family, which, though he bluſhed to own in public, he affectionately loved in private. His profeſſion, indeed, was but little in his thoughts, ſucceſſive engagements occupying almoſt all his hours. Delighted with the favour of the world, and charmed to find his preſence ſeemed the ſignal for entertainment, he ſoon forgot the uncertainty of his fortune, and the inferiority of his rank: the law grew more and more fatiguing, pleaſure became more and more alluring, and, by degrees, he had not a day unappropriated to ſome party or amuſement: voluntarily conſigning the few leiſure moments his gay circle afforded him, to the indulgence of his fancy in ſome haſty compoſitions in verſe, which were handed about in manuſcript, and which contributed to keep him in faſhion.

* See p. 16, 17. Vol. I.

Such was his ſituation at the death of his father; a new ſcene was then opened to him, and for ſome time he heſitated what courſe to purſue.

Old Mr. Belfield, though he lived in great affluence, left not behind him any conſiderable fortune, after the portions of his daughters, to each of whom he bequeathed 2000*l.* had been deducted from it. But his ſtock in trade was great, and his buſineſs was proſperous and lucrative.

His ſon, however, did not merely want application and fortitude to become his ſucceſſor, but ſkill and knowledge; his deliberation, therefore, was haſty, and his reſolution improvident; he determined to continue at the Temple himſelf, while the ſhop, which he could by no means afford to relinquiſh, ſhould be kept up by another name, and the buſineſs of it be tranſacted by an agent; hoping thus to ſecure and enjoy its emoluments, without either the trouble or the humiliation of attendance.

But this ſcheme, like moſt others that have their baſis in vanity, ended in nothing but mortification and diſappointment: the ſhop which under old Mr. Belfield had been flouriſhing and ſucceſsful, and enriched himſelf and all his family, could now ſcarce ſupport the expences of an individual. Without a maſter, without that diligent attention to *its proſperity* which the intereſt of poſſeſſion

alone

alone can give, and the authority of a principal alone can enforce, it quickly loſt its fame for the excellence of its goods, and ſoon after its cuſtomers from the report of its declenſion. The produce, therefore, diminiſhed every month; he was ſurpriſed, he was provoked; he was convinced he was cheated, and that his affairs were neglected; but though he threatened from time to time to enquire into the real ſtate of the buſineſs, and inveſtigate the cauſe of its decay, he felt himſelf inadequate to the taſk; and now firſt lamented that early contempt of trade, which by preventing his acquiring ſome knowledge of it while he had youth and opportunity, made him now ignorant what redreſs to ſeek; though certain of impoſition and injury.

But yet, however diſturbed by alarming ſuggeſtions in his hours of retirement, no alteration was made in the general courſe of his life; he was ſtill the darling of his friends, and the leader in all parties, and ſtill, though his income was leſſened, his expences encreaſed.

Such were his circumſtances at the time Cecilia firſt ſaw him at the houſe of Mr. Monckton: from which, two days after her arrival in town, he was himſelf ſummoned, by an information that his agent had ſuddenly left the kingdom.

The fatal conſequence of this fraudulent elopement was immediate bankruptcy.

His ſpirits, however, did not yet fail him; as he had never been the nominal maſter of the ſhop, he eſcaped all diſhonour from its ruin, and was ſatisfied to conſign what remained to the mercy of the creditors, ſo that his own name ſhould not appear in the Gazette.

Three of his ſiſters were already extremely well married to reputable tradeſmen; the two elder of thoſe who were yet ſingle were ſettled with two of thoſe who were married, and Henrietta, the youngeſt, reſided with her mother, who had a comfortable annuity and a ſmall houſe at Padington.

Bereft thus through vanity and imprudence of all the long labours of his father, he was now compelled to think ſeriouſly of ſome actual method of maintenance; ſince his mother, though willing to ſacrifice to him even the nouriſhment which ſuſtained her, could do for him but little, and that little he had too much juſtice to accept. The law, even to the moſt diligent and ſucceſsful, is extremely ſlow of profit, and whatever, from his connections and abilities might be hoped hereafter, at preſent required an expence which he was no longer able to ſupport.

It remained then to try his influence with his friends among the great and the powerful.

His canvaſs proved extremely honourable; every

every one promiſed ſomething, and all ſeemed delighted to have an opportunity of ſerving him.

Pleaſed with finding the world ſo much better than report had made it, he now ſaw the concluſion of his difficulties in the proſpect of a place at court.

Belfield, with half the penetration with which he was gifted, would have ſeen in any other man the deluſive idleneſs of expectations no better founded; but though diſcernment teaches us the folly of others, experience ſingly can teach us our own! he flattered himſelf that his friends had been more wiſely ſelected than the friends of thoſe who in ſimilar circumſtances had been beguiled; and he ſuſpected not the fraud of his vanity, till he found his invitations daily ſlacken, and that his time was at his own command.

All his hopes now reſted upon one friend and patron, Mr. Floyer, and uncle of Sir Robert Floyer, a man of power in the royal houſhold, with whom he had lived in great intimacy, and who at this period had the diſpoſal of a place which he ſolicited. The only obſtacle that ſeemed in his way was from Sir Robert himſelf, who warmly exerted his intereſt in favour of a friend of his own. Mr. Floyer, however, aſſured Belfield of the preference, and only begged his patience till

he could find ſome opportunity of appeaſing his nephew.

And this was the ſtate of his affairs at the time of his quarrel at the Opera-houſe. Already declared opponents of each other, Sir Robert felt double wrath that for *him* Cecilia ſhould reject his civilities; while Belfield, ſuſpecting he preſumed upon his known dependence on his uncle to affront him, felt alſo double indignation at the haughtineſs of his behaviour. And thus, ſlight as ſeemed to the world the cauſe of their conteſt, each had private motives of animoſity that ſerved to ſtimulate revenge.

The very day after this duel, Mr. Floyer wrote him word that he was now obliged in common decency to take the part of his nephew, and therefore had already given the place to the friend he had recommended.

This was the termination of his hopes, and the ſignal of his ruin! To the pain of his wound he became inſenſible, from the ſuperior pain of this unexpected miſcarriage; yet his pride ſtill enabled him to diſguiſe his diſtreſs, and to ſee all the friends whom this accident induced to ſeek him, while from the ſprightlineſs he forced in order to conceal his anguiſh, he appeared to them more lively and more entertaining than ever.

But theſe efforts, when left to himſelf and *to nature,* only ſunk him the deeper in ſadneſs; he found an immediate change in his way

way of life was neceſſary, yet could not brook to make it in ſight of thoſe with whom he had ſo long lived in all the brilliancy of equality. A high principle of honour which ſtill, in the midſt of his gay career, had remained uncorrupted, had ſcrupulouſly guarded him from running in debt, and therefore, though of little poſſeſſed, that little was ſtrictly his own. He now publiſhed that he was going out of town for the benefit of purer air, diſcharged his ſurgeon, took a gay leave of his friends, and truſting no one with his ſecret but his ſervant, was privately conveyed to mean and cheap lodgings in Swallow-Street.

Here, ſhut up from every human being he had formerly known, he purpoſed to remain till he grew better, and then again to ſeek his fortune in the army.

His preſent ſituation, however, was little calculated to contribute to his recovery; the diſmiſſion of the ſurgeon, the precipitation of his removal, the inconveniences of his lodgings, and the unſeaſonable deprivation of long cuſtomary indulgencies, were unavoidable delays of his amendment; while the mortification of his preſent diſgrace, and the bitterneſs of his late diſappointment, preyed inceſſantly upon his mind, robbed him of reſt, heightened his fever, and reduced him by degrees to a ſtate ſo low and dangerous, that his ſervant, alarmed for his

life, ſecretly acquainted his mother with his illneſs and retreat.

The mother, almoſt diſtracted by this intelligence, inſtantly, with her daughter, flew to his lodgings. She wiſhed to have taken him immediately to her houſe at Padington, but he had ſuffered ſo much from his firſt removal, that he would not conſent to another. She would then have called in a phyſician, but he refuſed even to ſee one; and ſhe had too long given way to all his deſires and opinions, to have now the force of mind for exerting the requiſite authority of iſſuing her orders without conſulting him.

She begged, ſhe pleaded, indeed, and Henrietta joined in her entreaties; but ſickneſs and vexation had not rendered him tame, though they had made him ſullen: he reſiſted their prayers, and commonly ſilenced them by aſſurances that their oppoſition to the plan he had determined to purſue, only inflamed his fever, and retarded his recovery.

The motive of an obduracy ſo cruel to his friends was the fear of a detection which he thought not merely prejudicial to his affairs, but diſhonourable to his character; for, without betraying any ſymptom of his diſtreſs, he had taken a general leave of his acquaintance, upon pretence of going out of town, and he could ill endure to make a diſcovery which would at once proclaim his *degradation* and his deceit.

Mr.

Mr. Albany had accidentally broken in upon him, by miſtaking his room for that of another ſick perſon in the ſame houſe, to whom his viſit had been intended; but as he knew and reverenced that old gentleman, he did not much repine at his intruſion.

He was not ſo eaſy when the ſame diſcovery was made by young Delvile, who chancing to meet his ſervant in the ſtreet, enquired concerning his maſter's health, and ſurpriſing from him its real ſtate, followed him home; where, ſoon certain of the change in his affairs by the change of his habitation, he wrote him a letter, in which, after apologizing for his freedom, he warmly declared that nothing could make him ſo happy as being favoured with his commands, if, either through himſelf or his friends, he could be ſo fortunate as to do him any ſervice.

Belfield, deeply mortified at this detection of his ſituation, returned only a verbal anſwer of cold thanks, and deſired he would not ſpeak of his being in town, as he was not well enough to be ſeen.

This reply gave almoſt equal mortification to young Delvile, who continued, however, to call at the door with enquiries how he went on, though he made no farther attempt to ſee him.

Belfield, ſoftened at length by the kindneſs of this conduct, determined to admit him; and he was juſt come from paying his

firſt viſit, when he was met by Cecilia upon the ſtairs.

His ſtay with him had been ſhort, and he had taken no notice either of his change of abode, or his pretence of going into the country; he had talked to him only in general terms and upon general ſubjects, till he aroſe to depart, and then he re-urged his offers of ſervice with ſo much openneſs and warmth, that Belfield, affected by his earneſtneſs, promiſed he would ſoon ſee him again, and intimated to his delighted mother and ſiſter, that he would frankly conſult with him upon his affairs.

Such was the tale which, with various minuter circumſtances, Miſs Belfield communicated to Cecilia. "My mother," ſhe added, "who never quits him, knows that you are here, madam, for ſhe heard me talking with ſomebody yeſterday, and ſhe made me tell her all that had paſſed, and that you ſaid you would come again this morning."

Cecilia returned many acknowledgments for this artleſs and unreſerved communication, but could not, when it was over, forbear enquiring by what early miſery ſhe had already, though ſo very young, ſpent *two years in nothing but unhappineſs?*

"Becauſe," ſhe anſwered, "when my poor father died all our family ſeparated, and I left every body to go and live with my mother *at Padington*; and I was never a favourite with

with my mother,—no more, indeed, was any body but my brother, for ſhe thinks all the reſt of the world only made for his ſake. So ſhe uſed to deny both herſelf and me almoſt common neceſſaries, in order to ſave up money to make him preſents: though, if he had known how it was done, he would only have been angry inſtead of taking them. However, I ſhould have regarded nothing that had but been for his benefit, for I loved him a great deal more than my own convenience; but ſums that would diſtreſs us for months to ſave up, would by him be ſpent in a day, and then thought of no more! Nor was that all——O no! I had much greater uneaſineſs to ſuffer; for I was informed by one of my brother's-in-law how ill every thing went, and that certain ruin would come to my poor brother from the treachery of his agent; and the thought of this was always preying upon my mind, for I did not dare tell it my mother, for fear it ſhould put her out of humour, for, ſometimes, ſhe is not very patient; and it mattered little what any of us ſaid to my brother, for he was too gay, and too confident to believe his danger."

"Well, but," ſaid Cecilia, "I hope, now, all will go better; if your brother will conſent to ſee a phyſician——"

"Ah, madam! that is the thing I fear he never will do, becauſe of being ſeen in theſe bad lodgings. I would kneel whole days to

prevail with him, but he is unuſed to controul, and knows not how to ſubmit to it; and he has lived ſo long among the great, that he forgets he was not born as high as themſelves. Oh that he had never quitted his own family! If he had not been ſpoilt by ambition, he had the beſt heart and ſweeteſt diſpoſition in the world. But living always with his ſuperiors, taught him to diſdain his own relations, and be aſhamed of us all; and yet now, in the hour of his diſtreſs—— who elſe comes to help him?"

Cecilia then enquired if ſhe wanted not aſſiſtance for herſelf and her mother, obſerving that they did not ſeem to have all the conveniences to which they were entitled.

"Why indeed, madam," ſhe replied, with an ingenuous ſmile, "when you firſt came here I was a little like my brother, for I was ſadly aſhamed to let you ſee how ill we lived! but now you know the worſt, ſo I ſhall fret about it no more."

"But this cannot be your uſual way of life; I fear the misfortunes of Mr. Belfield have ſpread a ruin wider than his own."

"No indeed; he took care from the firſt not to involve us in his hazards, for he is very generous, madam, and very noble in all his notions, and could behave to us all no better about money matters than he has ever done. But from the moment we came *to this* diſmal place, and ſaw his diſtreſs, and

that

that *he* was ſunk ſo low who uſed always to be higher than any of us, we had a ſad ſcene indeed! My poor mother, whoſe whole delight was to think that he lived like a nobleman, and who always flattered herſelf that he would riſe to be as great as the company he kept, was ſo diſtracted with her diſappointment, that ſhe would not liſten to reaſon, but immediately diſcharged both our ſervants, ſaid ſhe and I ſhould do all the work ourſelves, hired this poor room for us to live in, and ſent to order a bill to be put upon her houſe at Padington, for ſhe ſaid ſhe would never return to it any more."

"But are you then," cried Cecilia, "without any ſervant?"

"We have my brother's man, madam, and ſo he lights our fires, and takes away ſome of our litters; and there is not much elſe to be done, except ſweeping the rooms, for we eat nothing but cold meat from the cook ſhops."

"And how long is this to laſt?"

"Indeed I cannot tell; for the real truth is, my poor mother has almoſt loſt her ſenſes; and ever ſince our coming here, ſhe has been ſo miſerable and ſo complaining, that indeed, between her and my brother, I have almoſt loſt mine too! For when ſhe found all her hopes at an end, and that her darling ſon, inſtead of being rich and powerful, and ſurrounded by friends and admirers,

mirers, all trying who ſhould do the moſt for him, was ſhut up by himſelf in this poor little lodging, and inſtead of gaining more, had ſpent all he was worth at firſt, with not a creature to come near him, though ill, though confined, though keeping his bed!—Oh, madam, had you ſeen my poor mother when ſhe firſt caſt her eyes upon him in that condition!—indeed you could never have forgotten it!"

"I wonder not at her diſappointment," cried Cecilia; "with expectations ſo ſanguine, and a ſon of ſo much merit, it might well indeed be bitter."

"Yes, and beſides the diſappointment, ſhe is now continually reproaching herſelf for always complying with his humours, and aſſiſting him to appear better than the reſt of his family, though my father never approved her doing ſo. But ſhe thought herſelf ſo ſure of his riſing, that ſhe believed we ſhould all thank her for it in the end. And ſhe always uſed to ſay that he was born to be a gentleman, and what a grievous thing it would be to have him made a tradeſman."

"I hope, at leaſt, ſhe has not the additional miſery of ſeeing him ungrateful for her fondneſs, however injudicious it may have been?"

"O no! he does nothing but comfort and chear her! and indeed it is very good *of him*, for he has owned to me in private, that

that but for her encouragement, he could not have run the courſe he has run, for he ſhould have been obliged to enter into buſineſs, whether he had liked it or not. But my poor mother knows this, though he will not tell it her, and therefore ſhe ſays, that unleſs he gets well ſhe will puniſh herſelf all the reſt of her life, and never go back to her houſe, and never hire another ſervant, and never eat any thing but bread, nor drink any thing but water!"

"Poor unhappy woman!" cried Cecilia, "how dearly does ſhe pay for her imprudent and ſhort-ſighted indulgence! but ſurely you are not alſo to ſuffer in the ſame manner?"

"No, madam, not by her fault, for ſhe wants me to go and live with one of my ſiſters: but I would not quit her for the world; I ſhould think myſelf wicked indeed to leave her now. Beſides, I don't at all repine at the little hardſhips I go through at preſent, becauſe my poor brother is in ſo much diſtreſs, that all we ſave may be really turned to account; but when we lived ſo hardly only to procure him luxuries he had no right to, I muſt own I uſed often to think it unfair, and if I had not loved him dearly, I ſhould not have borne it ſo well, perhaps, as I ought."

Cecilia now began to think it high time to releaſe her new acquaintance by quitting her, though ſhe felt herſelf ſo much intereſted in

her

her affairs, that every word ſhe ſpoke gave her a deſire to lengthen the converſation. She ardently wiſhed to make her ſome preſent, but was reſtrained by the fear of offending, or of being again refuſed; ſhe had, however, deviſed a private ſcheme for ſerving her more effectually than by the donation of a few guineas, and therefore, after earneſtly begging to hear from her if ſhe could poſſibly be of any uſe, ſhe told her that ſhe ſhould not find her confidence miſplaced, and promiſing again to ſee her ſoon, reluctantly departed.

CHAP. V.

An Expedient.

THE ſcheme now projected by Cecilia, was to acquaint the ſurgeon who had already attended Mr. Belfield with his preſent ſituation and addreſs, and to deſire him to continue his viſits, for the payment of which ſhe would herſelf be accountable.

The raillery of young Delvile, however, had taught her to fear the conſtructions of the world, and ſhe therefore purpoſed to *keep both* the ſurgeon and Mr. Belfield ignorant

norant to whom they were indebted. She was aware, indeed, that whatever might be her management, that high-ſpirited and unfortunate young man would be extremely hurt to find himſelf thus detected and purſued; but ſhe thought his life too well worth preſerving to let it be ſacrificed to his pride, and her internal conviction of being herſelf the immediate cauſe of its preſent danger, gave her an anxious and reſtleſs deſire to be herſelf the means of extricating him from it.

Rupil, the name of the ſurgeon, ſhe had already heard mentioned by Mr. Arnott, and in getting into her chair, ſhe ordered Ralph, her man, to enquire where he lived.

"I know already where he lives, madam," anſwered Ralph, "for I ſaw his name over a door in Cavendiſh-Street, Oxford-Road; I took particular notice of it, becauſe it was at the houſe where you ſtood up that day on account of the mob that was waiting to ſee the malefactors go to Tyburn."

This anſwer unravelled to Cecilia a myſtery which had long perplext her; for the ſpeeches of young Delvile when he had ſurpriſed her in that ſituation were now fully explained. In ſeeing her come out of the ſurgeon's houſe, he had naturally concluded ſhe had only entered it to aſk news of his patient, Mr. Belfield; her proteſtations of merely ſtanding up to avoid the crowd, he had only laughed at;

and

and his hints at her reſerve and diſſimulation, were meant but to reproach her for refuſing his offer for procuring her intelligence, at the very time when, to all appearance, ſhe anxiouſly, though clandeſtinely, ſought it for herſelf.

This diſcovery, notwithſtanding it relieved her from all ſuſpence of his meaning, gave her much vexation: to be ſuppoſed to take an intereſt ſo ardent, yet ſo private, in the affairs of Mr. Belfield, might well authoriſe all ſuſpicions of her partiality for him: and even if any doubt had yet remained, the unlucky meeting upon the ſtairs at his lodgings, would not fail to diſpel it, and confirm the notion of her ſecret regard. She hoped, however, to have ſoon ſome opportunity of clearing up the miſtake, and reſolved in the mean time to be ſtudiouſly cautious in avoiding all appearances that might ſtrengthen it.

No caution, however, and no apprehenſion, could intimidate her active humanity from putting into immediate execution a plan in which ſhe feared any delay might be fatal; and therefore the moment ſhe got home, ſhe wrote the following note to the ſurgeon.

"To ——RUPIL, Eſq.

March 27, 1779.

A FRIEND of Mr. Belfield begs Mr. Rupil will immediately call upon that gentleman, *who is in lodgings* about the middle of Swal-

low

low-Street, and inſiſt upon viſiting him till he is perfectly recovered. Mr. Rupil is entreated not to make known this requeſt, nor to receive from Mr. Belfield any return for his attendance; but to attribute the diſcovery of his reſidence to accident, and to reſt aſſured he ſhall be amply recompenſed for his time and trouble by the friend who makes this application, and who is willing to give any ſecurity that Mr. Rupil ſhall think proper to mention, for the performance of this engagement."

Her next difficulty was in what manner to have this note conveyed; to ſend her own ſervant was evidently betraying herſelf, to employ any other was riſking a confidence that might be ſtill more dangerous, and ſhe could not truſt to the penny-poſt, as her propoſal required an anſwer. After much deliberation, ſhe at length determined to have recourſe to Mrs. Hill, to whoſe ſervices ſhe was entitled, and upon whoſe fidelity ſhe could rely.

The morning was already far advanced; but the Harrels dined late, and ſhe would not loſe a day where even an hour might be of importance. She went therefore immediately to Mrs. Hill, whom ſhe found already removed into her new habitation in Fetter-Lane, and equally buſy and happy in the *change of* ſcene and of employment.

She

She gave to her a note, which ſhe deſired her to carry to Cavendiſh-Street directly, and either to deliver it into Mr. Rupil's own hands, or to bring it back if he was out; but upon no conſideration to make known whence or from whom it came.

She then went into the back part of the ſhop, which by Mrs. Roberts was called the parlour, and amuſed herſelf during the abſence of her meſſenger, by playing with the children.

Mrs. Hill at her return ſaid ſhe had found Mr. Rupil at home, and as ſhe refuſed to give the letter to the ſervant, ſhe had been taken into a room where he was talking with a gentleman, to whom, as ſoon as he had read it, he ſaid with a laugh, "Why here's another perſon with the ſame propoſal as your's! however, I ſhall treat you both alike." And then he wrote an anſwer, which he ſealed up, and bid her take care of. This anſwer was as follows:

"Mr. Rupil will certainly attend Mr. Belfield, whoſe friends may be ſatisfied he will do all in his power to recover him, without receiving any recompence but the pleaſure of ſerving a gentleman who is ſo much beloved."

Cecilia, charmed at this unhoped for ſucceſs, was making farther enquiries into what had

had paſſed, when Mrs. Hill, in a low voice, ſaid, "There's the gentleman, madam, who was with Mr. Rupil when I gave him the letter. I had a notion he was dodging me all the way I came, for I ſaw him juſt behind me, turn which way I would."

Cecilia then looked—and perceived young Delvile! who, after ſtopping a moment at the door, came into the ſhop, and deſired to be ſhewn ſome gloves, which, among other things, were laid in the window.

Extremely diſconcerted at the ſight of him, ſhe began now almoſt to fancy there was ſome fatality attending her acquaintance with him, ſince ſhe was always ſure of meeting, when ſhe had any reaſon to wiſh avoiding him.

As ſoon as he ſaw he was obſerved by her, he bowed with the utmoſt reſpect: ſhe coloured in returning the ſalutation, and prepared, with no little vexation, for another attack, and farther raillery, ſimilar to what ſhe had already received from him: but, as ſoon as he had made his purchaſe, he bowed to her again, and, without ſpeaking, left the ſhop.

A ſilence ſo unexpected at once aſtoniſhed and diſturbed her; ſhe again deſired to hear all that had paſſed at Mr. Rupil's, and from the relation gathered that Delvile had himſelf undertaken to be reſponſible for his attendance upon Mr. Belfield.

A liberality

A liberality ſo like her own failed not to impreſs her with the moſt lively eſteem: but this ſerved rather to augment than leſſen the pain with which ſhe conſidered the clandeſtine appearance ſhe thus repeatedly made to him. She had no doubt he had immediately concluded ſhe was author of the application to the ſurgeon, and that he followed her meſſenger merely to aſcertain the fact; while his ſilence when he had made the diſcovery, ſhe could only attribute to his now believing that her regard for Mr. Belfield was too ſerious for raillery.

Doubly, however, ſhe rejoiced at the generoſity of Mr. Rupil, as it rendered wholly unneceſſary her farther interference: for ſhe now ſaw with ſome alarm the danger to which benevolence itſelf, directed towards a youthful object, might expoſe her.

CHAP. VI.

A REMONSTRANCE.

CECILIA returned home ſo late, that ſhe was ſummoned to the dining parlour the moment ſhe entered the houſe. Her morn-

ing

ing dreſs, and her long abſence, excited much curioſity in Mrs. Harrel, which a quick ſucceſſion of queſtions evaſively anſwered ſoon made general; and Sir Robert Floyer, turning to her with a look of ſurpriſe, ſaid, "If you have ſuch freaks as theſe, Miſs Beverley, I muſt begin to enquire a little more into your proceedings."

"That, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, very coldly, "would ill repay your trouble."

"When we get her to Violet-Bank," cried Mr. Harrel, "we ſhall be able to keep a better watch over her."

"I hope ſo," anſwered Sir Robert; "though, faith, ſhe has been ſo demure, that I never ſuppoſed ſhe did any thing but read ſermons. However, I find there's no going upon truſt with women, any more than with money."

"Ay, Sir Robert," cried Mrs. Harrel, "you know I always adviſed you not to be quite ſo eaſy, and I am ſure I really think you deſerve a little ſeverity, for not being more afraid."

"Afraid of what, madam?" cried the Baronet; "of a young lady's walking out without me? Do you think I wiſh to be any reſtraint upon Miſs Beverley's time in a morning, while I have the happineſs of waiting upon her every afternoon?"

Cecilia was thunderſtruck by this ſpeech, which not only expreſſed an open avowal of

his

his pretenſions, but a confident ſecurity of his ſucceſs. She was ſhocked that a man of ſuch principles ſhould even for a moment preſume upon her favour, and irritated at the ſtubbornneſs of Mr. Harrel in not acquainting him with her refuſal.

His intimation of coming to the houſe for *the happineſs of waiting upon her*, made her determine, without loſing a moment, to ſeek herſelf an explanation with him: while the diſcovery that he was included in the Eaſter party, which various other concomitant cauſes had already rendered diſagreeable to her, made her look forward to that purpoſed expedition with nothing but unwillingneſs and diſtaſte.

But though her earneſtneſs to conclude this affair made her now put herſelf voluntarily in the way of the Baronet, ſhe found her plan always counteracted by Mr. Harrel, who, with an officiouſneſs too obvious to paſs for chance, conſtantly ſtopt the progreſs of any diſcourſe in which he did not himſelf bear a part. A more paſſionate admirer might not have been ſo eaſily defeated; but Sir Robert, too proud for ſolicitation, and too indolent for aſſiduity, was very ſoon checked, becauſe very ſoon wearied.

The whole evening, therefore, to her infinite mortification, paſſed away without affording her any opportunity of making known to him his miſtake.

Her

Her next effort was to remonſtrate with Mr. Harrel himſelf; but this ſcheme was not more eaſy of execution than the other, ſince Mr. Harrel, ſuſpecting ſhe meant again to dun him for her money, avoided all ſeparate converſation with her ſo ſkilfully, that ſhe could not find a moment to make him hear her.

She then reſolved to apply to his lady; but here her ſucceſs was not better. Mrs. Harrel, dreading another lecture upon œconomy, peeviſhly anſwered to her requeſt of a conference, that ſhe was not very well, and could not talk gravely.

Cecilia, juſtly offended with them all, had now no reſource but in Mr. Monckton, whoſe counſel for effectually diſmiſſing the Baronet, ſhe determined to ſolicit by the firſt opportunity.

The moment, therefore, that ſhe next ſaw him, ſhe acquainted him with the ſpeeches of Sir Robert and the behaviour of Mr. Harrel.

There needed no rhetoric to point out to Mr. Monckton the danger of ſuffering ſuch expectations, or the impropriety of her preſent ſituation: he was ſtruck with both in a manner the moſt forcible, and ſpared not for warmth of expreſſion to alarm her delicacy, or add to her diſpleaſure. But chiefly he was exaſperated againſt Mr. Harrel, aſſuring her there could be no doubt but that he had ſome particular intereſt in ſo ſtrenuouſly and

artfully ſupporting the pretenſions of Sir Robert. Cecilia endeavoured to refute this opinion, which ſhe regarded as proceeding rather from prejudice than juſtice; but when ſhe mentioned that the Baronet was invited to ſpend the Eaſter holidays at Violet-Bank, he repreſented with ſuch energy the conſequent conſtructions of the world, as well as the unavoidable encouragement ſuch intimacy would imply, that he terrified her into an earneſt entreaty to ſuggeſt to her ſome way of deliverance.

"There is only one," anſwered he, "you muſt peremptorily refuſe to go to Violet-Bank yourſelf. If, after what has paſſed, you are included in the ſame party with Sir Robert, you give a ſanction yourſelf to the reports already circulated of your engagements with him: and the effect of ſuch a ſanction will be more ſerious than you can eaſily imagine, ſince the knowledge that a connection is believed in the world, frequently if not generally, leads by imperceptible degrees to its real ratification."

Cecilia, with the utmoſt alacrity, promiſed implicitly to follow his advice, whatever might be the oppoſition of Mr. Harrel. He quitted her, therefore, with unuſual ſatisfaction, happy in his power over her mind, and anticipating with ſecret rapture the felicity he had in reſerve from viſiting her during the abſence of the family.

As

As no private interview was necessary for making known her intention of giving up the Ranelagh party, which was to take place in two days time, she mentioned the next morning her design of spending the holidays in town, when Mr. Harrel sauntered into the breakfast room to give some commission to his lady.

At first he only laughed at her plan, gaily rallying her upon her love of solitude; but when he found it was serious, he very warmly opposed it, and called upon Mrs. Harrel to join in his expostulations. That lady complied, but in so faint a manner, that Cecilia soon saw she did not wish to prevail; and with a concern that cost her infinite pain, now finally perceived that not only all her former affection was subsided into indifference, but that, since she had endeavoured to abridge her amusements, she regarded her as a spy, and dreaded her as the censor of her conduct.

Mean while Mr. Arnott, who was present, though he interfered not in the debate, waited the event with anxiety; naturally hoping her objections arose from her dislike of Sir Robert, and secretly resolving to be guided himself by her motions.

Cecilia at length, tired of the importunities of Mr. Harrel, gravely said, that if he desired to hear the reasons which obliged her to refuse his request, she was ready to communicate them.

Mr. Harrel, after a little hesitation, accompanied her into another room.

She then declared her resolution not to live under the same roof with Sir Robert, and very openly expressed her vexation and displeasure that he so evidently persisted in giving that gentleman encouragement.

"My dear Miss Beverley," answered he, carelessly, "when young ladies will not know their own minds, it is necessary some friend should tell it them: you were certainly very favourable to Sir Robert but a short time ago, and so, I dare say, you will be again, when you have seen more of him."

"You amaze me, Sir!" cried Cecilia: "when was I favourable to him? Has he not always and regularly been my aversion?"

"I fancy," answered Mr. Harrel, laughing, "you will not easily persuade him to think so; your behaviour at the Opera-house was ill calculated to give him that notion."

"My behaviour at the Opera-house, Sir, I have already explained to you; and if Sir Robert himself has any doubts, either from that circumstance or from any other, pardon me if I say they can only be attributed to your unwillingness to remove them. I entreat you, therefore, to trifle with him no longer, nor to subject me again to the mortification of explications extremely disagreeable to me."

"O fie,

"O fie, fie, Miss Beverley! after all that has passed, after his long expectations, and his constant attendance, you cannot for a moment think seriously of discarding him."

Cecilia, equally surprised and provoked by this speech, could not for a moment tell how to answer it; and Mr. Harrel, wilfully misinterpreting her silence, took her hand, and said, "Come, I am sure you have too much honour to make a fool of such a man as Sir Robert Floyer. There is not a woman in town who will not envy your choice, and I assure you there is not a man in England I would so soon recommend to you."

He would then have hurried her back to the next room; but drawing away her hand with undisguised resentment, "No, Sir," she cried, "this must not pass! my positive rejection of Sir Robert the instant you communicated to me his proposals, you can neither have forgotten nor mistaken: and you must not wonder if I acknowledge myself extremely disobliged by your unaccountable perseverance in refusing to receive my answer."

"Young ladies who have been brought up in the country," returned Mr. Harrel, with his usual negligence, "are always so high flown in their notions, it is difficult to deal with them; but as I am much better acquainted with the world than you can be, you must give me leave to tell you, "that is,

after all, you refuse Sir Robert, it will be using him very ill.

"Why will you say so, Sir," cried Cecilia, "when it is utterly impossible you can have formed so preposterous an opinion. But hear me, however, finally, and pray tell Sir Robert——"

"No, no," interrupted he, with affected gaiety, "you shall manage it all your own way; I will have nothing to do with the quarrels of lovers."

And then, with a pretended laugh, he hastily left her.

Cecilia was so much incensed by this impracticable behaviour, that instead of returning to the family, she went directly to her own room. It was easy for her to see that Mr. Harrel was bent upon using every method he could devise, to entangle her into some engagement with Sir Robert, and though she could not imagine the meaning of such a scheme, the littleness of his behaviour excited her contempt, and the long continued error of the Baronet gave her the utmost uneasiness. She again determined to seek an explanation with him herself, and immovably to refuse joining the party to Vauxhall.

The following day, while the ladies and Mr. Arnott were at breakfast, Mr. Harrel came into the room to enquire if they should all be ready to set off for his villa by ten o'clock the next day. Mrs. Harrel and her brother

brother answered in the affirmative; but Cecilia was silent, and he turned to her and repeated his question.

"Do you think me so capricious, Sir," said she, "that after telling you but yesterday I could not be of your party, I shall tell you to-day that I can?"

"Why you do not really mean to remain in town by yourself?" replied he, "you cannot suppose that will be an eligible plan for a young lady. On the contrary, it will be so very improper, that I think myself, as your Guardian, obliged to oppose it."

Amazed at this authoritative speech, Cecilia looked at him with a mixture of mortification and anger; but knowing it would be vain to resist his power if he was resolute to exert it, she made not any answer.

"Besides," he continued, "I have a plan for some alterations in the house during my absence; and I think your room, in particular, will be much improved by them: but it will be impossible to employ any workmen, if we do not all quit the premises."

This determined persecution now seriously alarmed her; she saw that Mr. Harrel would omit no expedient or stratagem to encourage the addresses of Sir Robert, and force her into his presence; and she began next to apprehend that her connivance in his conduct might be presumed upon by that gentleman: she resolved, therefore, as the last and only

effort in her power for avoiding him, to endeavour to find an accommodation at the house of Mrs. Delvile, during the excursion to Violet Bank: and if, when she returned to Portman-Square, the Baronet still persisted in his attendance, to intreat her friend Mr. Monckton would take upon himself the charge of undeceiving him.

CHAP. VII.

A VICTORY.

AS not a moment was now to be loſt, Cecilia had no ſooner ſuggeſted this ſcheme, than ſhe haſtened to St. James's-Square, to try its practicability.

She found Mrs. Delvile alone, and ſtill at breakfaſt.

After the firſt compliments were over, while ſhe was conſidering in what manner to introduce her propoſal, Mrs. Delvile herſelf led to the ſubject, by ſaying, "I am very ſorry to hear we are ſo ſoon to loſe you; but I hope Mr. Harrel does not intend to make any long ſtay at his villa; for if he does, I ſhall

shall be half tempted to come and run away with you from him."

"And that," said Cecilia, delighted with this opening, "would be an honour I am more than half tempted to desire."

"Why, indeed your leaving London at this time," continued Mrs. Delvile, "is, for me, particularly unfortunate, as, if I could now be favoured with your visits, I should doubly value them; for Mr. Delvile is gone to spend the holidays at the Duke of Derwent's, whither I was not well enough to accompany him; my son has his own engagements, and there are so few people I can bear to see, that I shall live almost entirely alone."

"If I," cried Cecilia, "in such a situation might hope to be admitted, how gladly for that happiness would I exchange my expedition to Violet-Bank!"

"You are very good, and very amiable," said Mrs. Delvile, "and your society would, indeed, give me infinite satisfaction. Yes I am no enemy to solitude; on the contrary, company is commonly burthensome to me; I find few who have any power to give me entertainment, and even of those few, the chief part have in their manners, situation, or characters, an unfortunate *something*, that generally renders a near connection with them inconvenient or disagreeable. There are, indeed, so many draw-backs to regard

and intimacy, from pride, from prudence, and various other collateral causes, that commonly arise when we meet with people of brilliant parts, there is almost ever some objection to our desire of meeting them again. Yet to live wholly alone is cheerless and depressing; and with you, at least," taking Cecilia's hand, "I find not one single obstacle to oppose to a thousand inducements, which invite me to form a friendship that I can only hope may be as lasting, as I am sure it will be pleasant."

Cecilia expressed her sense of this partiality in the warmest terms; and Mrs. Delvile, soon discovering by her manner that she took not any delight in her intended visit to Violet-Bank, began next to question her whether it would be possible for her to give it up.

She instantly answered in the affirmative.

"And would you really be so obliging," cried Mrs. Delvile, with some surprise, "as to bestow upon me the time you had destined for this gay excursion?"

"Most willingly," answered Cecilia, "if you are so good as to wish it."

"But can you also —— for you must by no means remain alone in Portman-Square; —— manage to live entirely in my house till Mr. Harrel's return?"

To this proposal, which was what she most desired, Cecilia gave a glad assent; and Mrs. Delvile, extremely pleased with her compli-

ance,

ance, promised to have an apartment prepared for her immediately.

She then hastened home, to announce her new plan.

This she took occasion to do when the family was assembled at dinner. The surprise with which she was heard was very general: Sir Robert seemed at a loss what conclusion to draw from her information; Mr. Arnott was half elated with pleasure, and half depressed with apprehension; Mrs. Harrel wondered, without any other sensation; and Mr. Harrel himself was evidently the most concerned of the party.

Every effort of persuasion and importunity he now essayed to prevail upon her to give up this scheme, and still accompany them to the villa; but she coolly answered, that her engagement with Mrs. Delvile was decided, and she had appointed to wait upon her the next morning.

When her resolution was found so steady, a general ill-humour took place of surprise. Sir Robert now had the air of a man who thought himself affronted; Mr. Arnott was wretched from a thousand uncertainties; Mrs. Harrel, indeed, was still the most indifferent, but Mr. Harrel could hardly repress his disappointment and anger.

Cecilia, however, was all gaiety and pleasure: in removing only from the house of one guardian to another, she knew she could

not to be opposed, and the entreating greatness with which Mrs. Delvile had anticipated her request, without enquiring into her motives, had relieved her from a situation which now grew extremely distressing, without giving to her the pain of making complaints of Mr. Harrel. The absence of Mr. Delvile contributed to her happiness, and she much rejoiced in having now the prospect of a speedy opportunity to explain to his son, whatever had appeared mysterious in her conduct respecting Mr. Belfield. If she had any thing to regret, it was merely the impossibility, at this time, of waiting for the counsel of Mr. Monckton.

The next morning, while the family was in the midst of preparation for departure, she took leave of Mrs. Harrel, who faintly lamented the loss of her company, and then hastily made her compliments to Mr. Harrel and Mr. Arnott, and putting herself into a chair, was conveyed to her new habitation.

Mrs. Delvile received her with the most distinguished politeness, she conducted her to the apartment which had been prepared for her, led her to the library, which she desired her to make use of as her own, and gave her the most obliging charge to remember that she was in a house of which she had the command.

Young Delvile did not make his appearance

till dinner time, Cecilia, from recollecting the strange disputes in which she had lately been seen by him, blushed extremely when she first met his eyes; but finding him gay and easy, general in his conversation, and undesigning in his looks, she soon recovered from her embarrassment, and passed the rest of the day without restraint or uneasiness.

Every hour she spent with Mrs. Delvile, contributed to raise in her esteem the mind and understanding of that lady. She found, indeed, that it was not for nothing she was so void of pride, but she found at the same time so many excellent qualities, so much true dignity of mind, and so noble a spirit of liberality, that however great was the respect she seemed to demand, it was always inferior to what she felt inclined to pay.

Nor was young Delvile less rapid in the progress he made in her favour; his character, upon every opportunity of shewing it, rose in her opinion, and his disposition and manners had a mingled sweetness and vivacity that rendered his society attractive and his conversation spirited.

Here, therefore, Cecilia experienced that happiness she so long had coveted in vain: her life was neither public nor private, her amusements were neither dissipated nor retired; the company she saw were either people of high rank or strong parts, and their

visits

visits were neither frequent nor long. The situation she quitted gave a relief to that into which she entered; for she was now no longer shocked by extravagance or levity, nor longer tormented with addresses which disgusted her, nor mortified by the ingratitude of the friend she had endeavoured to serve. All was smooth and serene, yet lively and interesting.

Her plan, however, of clearing to young Delvile his mistakes concerning Belfield, she could not put in execution; for he now never led to the subject, though he was frequently alone with her, nor seemed at all desirous to renew his former raillery, or repeat his enquiries. She wondered at this change in him, but chose rather to wait the revival of his own curiosity, than to distress or perplex herself by contriving methods of explanation.

Situated thus happily, she had now one only anxiety, which was to know whether, and in what manner, Mr. Belfield had received his surgeon, as well as the actual state of his own and his sister's affairs: but the fear of again encountering young Delvile in suspicious circumstances, deterred her at present from going to their house. Yet her natural benevolence, which partial convenience never lulled to sleep, impressing her with an apprehension that her services might be wanted, she was induced to write to Miss *Belfield*, though she forbore to visit her.

Her

Her letter was short, but kind and to the purpose: she apologized for her officiousness, desired to know if her brother was better, and endeavored, in terms the most delicate, to acquaint her if yet she would accept from her any assistance.

She sent this letter by her servant, who, after waiting a considerable time, brought her the following answer:

To Miss Beverley.

Ah, madam! your goodness quite melts me! we want nothing, however, yet, though I fear we shall not say so much longer. But though I hope I shall never forget myself so as to be proud and impertinent, I will rather struggle with any hardship than beg, for I will not disoblige my poor brother by any fault that I can help, especially now he is fallen so low. But, thank heaven, his wound has at last been dressed, for the surgeon has found him out, and he attends him for nothing; though my brother is willing to part with every thing he is worth in the world, rather than owe that obligation to him: yet I often wonder why he hates so to be obliged, for when he was rich himself he was always doing something to oblige other people. But I fear the surgeon thinks him very bad; for he won't speak to us when we follow him down stairs.

I am

I am sadly ashamed to send this bad writing, but I place not ask my brother for any help, because he would only be angry that I wrote any thing about him at all: but indeed I have seen too little good come of pride to think of imitating it; and as I have not his genius, I am sure there is no need I should have his defects: ill, therefore, as I write, you, madam, who have so much goodness and gentleness, would forgive it, I believe, if it was worse, almost. And though we are not in need of your kind offers, it is a great comfort to me to think there is a lady in the world that, if we come to be quite destitute, and if the proud heart of my poor unhappy brother should be quite broke down, will look upon our distress with pity, and generously help us from quite sinking under it. I remain,

Madam,

with the most humble respect,

your ever most obliged

humble servant,

HENRIETTA BELFIELD.

Cecilia, much moved by the simplicity of this letter, determined that her very first visit from Portman-Square should be to its fair and innocent writer. And having now an assurance that she was in no immediate distress, and that her brother was actually under Mr. Rupit's care, she dismissed from

her

her mind the only ſubject of uneaſineſs that we preſent had endeavoured to diſturb it, and gave herſelf wholly up to the delightful ſerenity of unallayed happineſs.

Few are the days of unmixed felicity which we acknowledge while we experience, though many are thoſe we deplore, when by ſorrow taught their value, and by misfortune, their loſs. Time with Cecilia now glided on with ſuch rapidity, that before ſhe thought the morning half over, the evening was cloſed, and ere ſhe was ſenſible the firſt week was paſt, the ſecond was departed for ever. More and more pleaſed with the inmates of her new habitation, ſhe found in the abilities of Mrs. Delvile ſources inexhauſtible of entertainment, and in the diſpoſition and ſentiments of her ſon ſomething ſo concordant to her own, that almoſt every word he ſpoke ſhewed the ſympathy of their minds, and almoſt every look which caught her eyes was a reciprocation of intelligence. Her heart, deeply wounded of late by unexpected indifference, and undeſerved mortification, was now, perhaps, more than uſually ſuſceptible of thoſe penetrating and exquiſite pleaſures which friendſhip and kindneſs poſſeſs the higheſt powers of beſtowing. Eaſy, gay, and airy, ſhe only roſe to happineſs, and only retired to reſt; and not merely heightened was her preſent enjoyment by her paſt diſappointment, but, carrying her retroſpec-

tion

tion to her earliest remembrance, she still found her actual situation more peculiarly adapted to her taste and temper, than any she had hitherto at any time experienced.

The very morning that the destined fortnight was elapsed, she received a note from Mrs. Harrel, with information of her arrival in town, and an entreaty that she would return to Portman Square.

Cecilia, who, thus happy, had forgot to mark the progress of time, was now all amazement to find the term of her absence so soon past. She thought of going back with the utmost reluctance, and of quitting her new abode with the most lively regret. The representations of Mr. Monckton daily lost their force, and notwithstanding her dislike of Mr. Delvile, she had no wish so earnest as that of being settled in his family for the rest of her minority.

To effect this was her next thought; yet she knew not how to make the proposal, but from the uncommon partiality of Mrs. Delvile, she hoped, with a very little encouragement, she would lead to it herself.

Here, however, she was disappointed; Mrs. Delvile, when she heard of the fortunes from the Harrels, expressed her sorrow at losing her in terms of the most flattering regret, yet seemed to think the parting indispensable, and dropt not the most distant hint of attempting to prevent it.

Cecilia,

Cecilia, revived and encouraged, then made arrangements for her departure, which she fixed for the next morning.

The rest of this day, unlike every other which for the last fortnight had preceded it, was passed with little appearance, and no reality of satisfaction: Mrs. Delvile was evidently concerned, her son openly avowed his chagrin, and Cecilia felt the utmost mortification; yet, though every one was disconcerted, no effort was made towards obtaining any delay.

The next morning during breakfast, Mrs. Delvile very elegantly thanked her for granting to her so much of her time, and earnestly begged to see her in future whenever she could be spared from her other friends; protesting she was now so accustomed to her society, that she should require both long and frequent visits to soften the separation. This request was very eagerly seconded by young Delvile, who warmly spoke his satisfaction that his mother had found so charming a friend, and unaffectedly joined in her entreaties that the intimacy might be still more closely cemented.

Cecilia had no great difficulty in according her compliance to those demands, of which the kindness and cordiality somewhat softened her disturbance at the parting.

When Mrs. Harrel's carriage arrived, Mrs.

Mrs. Delvile took a most affectionate leave of her, and her son attended her to the coach.

In her way down stairs, she stopt her for a few moments, and in some confusion said, "I wish much to apologize to Miss Beverley, before her departure, for the very gross mistake of which I have been guilty. I know not if it is possible she can pardon me, and I hardly know myself by what perversity and blindness I persisted so long in my error."

"O," cried Cecilia, much rejoiced at this voluntary explanation, "if you are but convinced you were really in an error, I have nothing more to wish. Appearances, indeed, were so strangely against me, that I ought not, perhaps, to wonder they deceived you."

"This is being candid indeed," answered he, again leading her on; "and in truth, though your anxiety was obvious, its cause was obscure, and where any thing is left to conjecture, opinion interferes, and the judgment is easily warped. My own partiality, however, for Mr. Belfield, will I hope plead my excuse, as from that, and not from any prejudice against the Baronet, my mistake arose: on the contrary, so highly I respect your taste and your discernment, that your approbation, when known, can scarcely fail of securing mine."

Great was the astonishment of Cecilia at the conclusion of this speech; she was at the coach door before she could make any answer;

answer; but Delvile perceiving her surprize, added, while he handed her in, "Is it possible—but no, it is not possible I should be again mistaken. I forbore to speak on all till I had information by which I could not be misled."

"I know not in what unaccountable obscurity," cried Cecilia, "I, or my affairs, may be involved, but I perceive that the cloud which I had hoped was dissipated, is thicker and more impenetrable than ever."

Delvile then bowed to her with a look that accused her of insincerity, and the carriage drove away.

Teazed by these eternal mistakes, and provoked to find that though the object of her supposed partiality was so frequently changed, the notion of her positive engagement with one of the duellists was invariable, she resolved, with all the speed in her power, to commission Mr. Monckton to wait upon Sir Robert Floyer, and in her own name give a formal rejection to his proposals, and desire him thenceforward to make known, by every opportunity, their total independance of each other; for sick of debating with Mr. Harrel, and detesting all intercourse with Sir Robert, she now dropt her design of seeking an explanation herself.

She was received by Mrs. Harrel with the same coldness with which she had parted from her. That lady appeared now to have some uneasiness

uneasiness upon her mind, and Cecilia endeavoured to draw from her its cause; but far from seeking any alleviation in friendship, she studiously avoided her, seeming pained by her conversation, and reproached by her sight. Cecilia perceived this encreasing reserve with much concern, but with more indignation, conscious that her good offices had merited a better reception, and angry to find that her advice had not merely failed of success, but even exposed her to aversion.

Mr. Harrel, on the contrary, behaved to her with unusual civility; seemed eager to oblige her, and desirous to render his house more agreeable to her than ever. But in this he did not prosper; for Cecilia, immediately upon her return, looking in her apartment for the projected alterations, and finding none had been made, was so disgusted by such a detection of duplicity, that he sunk yet lower than before in her opinion, and she repined at the necessity she was under of any longer continuing his guest.

The joy of Mr. Arnott at again seeing her, was visible and sincere; and not a little was it encreased by finding that Cecilia, who sought not more to avoid Mr. Harrel and Sir Robert, than she was herself avoided by Mrs. Harrel, talked with pleasure to nobody else in the house, and scarcely attempted to conceal that she was the only one of the family who possessed any portion of her esteem.

Even

Even Sir Robert appeared now to have formed a deſign of paying her father more reſpect than he had hitherto thought neceſſary; but the violence he did himſelf was ſo evident, and his imperious nature ſeemed ſo repugnant to the taſk, that his inſolence, breaking forth by ſtarts, and checked only by compulſion, was but the more conſpicuous from his inadequate efforts to diſguiſe it.

CHAP. VIII.

A COMPLAINT.

AS Cecilia now found herſelf cleared, at leaſt, of all ſuſpicions of harbouring too tender a regard for Mr. Belfield, her objections to viſiting his ſiſter were removed, and the morning after her return to Mr. Harrel's ſhe went in a chair to Swallow-Street.

She ſent her ſervant up ſtairs to enquire if ſhe might be admitted, and was immediately taken into the room where ſhe had twice before been received.

In a few minutes Miſs Belfield, ſoftly opening and ſhutting the door of the next apartment,

apartment, made her appearance. She looked thin and pale, but much gratified by the ſight of Cecilia. "Ah, Madam!" ſhe cried, "you are good indeed not to forget us! and you can little think how it chears and conſoles me, that ſuch a lady as you can condeſcend to be kind to me. It is quite the only pleaſure that I have now in the whole world."

"I grieve that you have no greater;" cried Cecilia, "you ſeem much fatigued and harraſſed. How is your brother? I fear you neglect your own health, by too much attention to his."

"No, indeed, madam; my mother does every thing for him herſelf, and hardly ſuffers any body elſe to go near him."

"What, then, makes you ſo melancholy?" ſaid Cecilia, taking her hand; "you do not look well; your anxiety, I am ſure, is too much for your ſtrength."

"How ſhould I look well, madam," anſwered ſhe, "living as I live? however, I will not talk of myſelf, but of my brother.—O he is ſo ill! indeed I am ſadly, ſadly afraid he will never be well again!"

"What does his ſurgeon ſay? you are too tender, and too much frightened to be any judge."

"It is not that I think myſelf he will die of his wound, for Mr. Rupil ſays the wound is almoſt nothing; but he is in a conſtant fever,

fever, and ſo thin and ſo weak, that indeed it is almoſt impoſſible he ſhould recover!"

"You are too apprehenſive," ſaid Cecilia; "you know not what effect the country air may have upon him; there are many, many expedients that with ſo young a man may yet be ſucceſsful."

"O no, the country air can do nothing for him! for I will not deceive you, madam, for that would be doubly a fault when I am ſo ready in blaming other people for wearing falſe appearances: beſides, you are ſo good and ſo gentle, that it quite compoſes me to talk with you. So I will honeſtly ſpeak the truth, and the whole truth at once; my poor brother is loſt—O I fear for ever loſt!—all by his own unhappy pride! he forgets his father was a tradeſman, he is aſhamed of all his family, and his whole deſire is to live among the grandeſt people, as if he belonged to no other. And now that he can no longer do that, he takes the diſappointment ſo to heart that he cannot get the better of it; and he told me this morning that he wiſhed he was dead, for he did not know why he ſhould live only to ſee his own ruin! But when he ſaw how I cried at his ſaying ſo, he was very ſorry indeed, for he has always been the kindeſt brother in the world, when he has been away from the great folks who have ſpoilt him: but why, ſaid he, Henrietta, why would you have me live, when inſtead

of raiſing you and my poor mother into an higher ſtation, I am ſunk ſo low, that I only help to conſume your own poor pittances, to ſupport me in my diſgrace!"

I am ſorry indeed," ſaid Cecilia, "to find he has ſo deep a ſenſe of the failure of his expectations: but how happens it that *you* are ſo much wiſer? Young and inexperienced as you are, and early as you muſt have been accuſtomed, from your mother as well as from Mr. Belfield, to far other doctrine, the clearneſs of your judgment, and the juſtneſs of your remarks, aſtoniſh as much as they charm me."

"Ah, madam! brought up as I have been brought up, there is little wonder I ſhould ſee the danger of an high education, let me be ever ſo ignorant of every thing elſe; for I, and all my ſiſters, have been the ſufferers the whole time: and while we were kept backward that he might be brought forward, while we were denied comforts, that he might have luxuries, how could we help ſeeing the evil of ſo much vanity, and wiſhing we had all been brought up according to our proper ſtation? inſtead of living in continual inconvenience, and having one part of a family ſtruggling with diſtreſs, only to let another part of it appear in a way he had no right to!"

"How rationally," ſaid Cecilia, "have *you* conſidered this ſubject! and how much

do

do I honour you for the affection you retain for your brother, notwithſtanding the wrongs you have ſuffered to promote his elevation!"

"Indeed he deſerves it; take but from him that one fault, pride, and I believe he has not another: and humoured and darling child as from his infancy he has always been, who at that can wonder, or be angry?"

"And has he ſtill no plan, no ſcheme for his future deſtination?"

"No, madam, none at all; and that it is makes him ſo miſerable, and being ſo miſerable makes him ſo ill; for Mr. Rupil ſays, that with ſuch uneaſineſs upon his mind, he can never, in his preſent low ſtate, get well. O it is melancholy to ſee how he is altered! and how he has loſt all his fine ſpirits! he that uſed to be the life of us all!—And now he hardly ever ſpeaks a word, or if he does, he ſays ſomething ſo ſorrowful that it cuts us to the ſoul! But yeſterday, when my mother and I thought he was aſleep, he lifted up his head, and looked at us both with the tears in his eyes, which almoſt broke our hearts to ſee, and then, in a low voice, he ſaid, "what a lingering illneſs is this! Ah, my dear mother, you and poor Henrietta ought to wiſh it quicker over! for ſhould I recover, my life, hereafter, will but linger like this illneſs." And afterwards he called out, "what on earth is to become of me? I ſhall never have health for the army, nor intereſt, nor

means; what am I to do? ſubſiſt in the very prime of my life upon the bounty of a widowed mother! or, with ſuch an education, ſuch connections as mine, enter at laſt into ſome mean and ſordid buſineſs?"

"It ſeems then," ſaid Cecilia, "he now leſs wants a phyſician than a friend."

"He has a friend, madam, a noble friend, would he but accept his ſervices; but he never ſees him without ſuffering freſh vexation, and his fever encreaſes after every viſit he pays him."

"Well," cried Cecilia, riſing, "I find we ſhall not have an eaſy taſk to manage him; but keep up your ſpirits, and aſſure yourſelf he ſhall not be loſt, if it be poſſible to ſave him."

She then, though with much fearfulneſs of offending, once more made an offer of her purſe. Miſs Belfield no longer ſtarted at the propoſal; yet gratefully thanking her, ſaid ſhe was not in any immediate diſtreſs, and did not dare riſk the diſpleaſure of her brother, unleſs driven to it by ſevere neceſſity. Cecilia, however, drew from her a promiſe that ſhe would apply to her in any ſudden difficulty, and charged her never to think herſelf without a banker while her direction was known to her.

She then bid her adieu, and returned home, meditating the whole way upon ſome plan of employment and advantage for Mr. Belfield, which

which by clearing his proſpects, might revive his ſpirits, and facilitate his recovery: for ſince his mind was ſo evidently the ſeat of his diſeaſe, ſhe ſaw that unleſs ſhe could do more for him, ſhe had yet done nothing.

Her meditation, however, turned to no account; ſhe could ſuggeſt nothing, for ſhe was ignorant what was eligible to ſuggeſt. The ſtations and employments of men ſhe only knew by occaſionally hearing that ſuch were their profeſſions, and ſuch their ſituations in life; but with the means and gradations by which they aroſe to them ſhe was wholly unacquainted.

Mr. Monckton, her conſtant reſource in all caſes of difficulty, immediately occurred to her as her moſt able counſellor, and ſhe determined by the firſt opportunity to conſult with him upon the ſubject, certain of advice the moſt judicious from his experience and knowledge of the world.

But though ſhe reſted upon him her ſerious expectations of aſſiſtance, another idea entered her mind not leſs pleaſant, though leſs promiſing of utility: this was to mention her views to young Delvile. He was already, ſhe knew, well informed of the diſtreſs of Mr. Belfield, and ſhe hoped, by openly aſking his opinion, to confirm to him her freedom from any engagement with that gentleman, and convince him, at the ſame time, by her application to himſelf, that ſhe was equally clear *of any tie with* the Baronet.

CHAP. IX.

A SYMPATHY.

THE next day Cecilia had appointed to ſpend in St. James's-Square; and ſhe knew by experience that in its courſe, ſhe ſhould in all probability find ſome opportunity of ſpeaking with Delvile alone.

This accordingly happened; for in the evening Mrs. Delvile quitted the room for a few moments to anſwer a letter. Cecilia, then, left with her ſon, ſaid, after a little heſitation, "Will you not think me very ſtrange if I ſhould take the liberty to conſult you upon ſome buſineſs?"

"I already think you very ſtrange," anſwered he; "ſo ſtrange that I know not any one who at all reſembles you. But what is this conſultation in which you will permit me to have a voice?"

"You are acquainted, I believe, with the diſtreſs of Mr. Belfield?"

"I am; and I think his ſituation the moſt melancholy that can be imagined. I pity him with my whole ſoul, and nothing would give me greater joy than an opportunity of *ſerving him.*"

"He

"He is, indeed, much to be compaſſionated," returned Cecilia, "and if ſomething is not ſpeedily done for him, I fear he will be utterly loſt. The agitation of his mind baffles all the power of medicine, and till that is relieved, his health can never be reſtored. His ſpirit, probably always too high for his rank in life, now ſtruggles againſt every attack of ſickneſs and of poverty, in preference to yielding to his fate, and applying to his friends for their intereſt and aſſiſtance. I mean not to vindicate his obduracy, yet I wiſh it were poſſible it could be ſurmounted. Indeed I dread to think what may become of him! feeling at preſent nothing but wretchedneſs and pain, looking forward in future to nothing but ruin and deſpair!"

"There is no man," cried young Delvile, with emotion, "who might not rather envy than pity ſufferings which give riſe to ſuch compaſſion!"

"Pecuniary aſſiſtance he will not accept," ſhe continued, "and, indeed, his mind is ſuperior to receiving conſolation from ſuch temporary relief; I wiſh him, therefore, to be put into ſome way of life by which his own talents, which have long enough amuſed the world, may at length become ſerviceable to himſelf. Do you think, Sir, this is poſſible?"

"How do I rejoice," cried Delvile, colouring with pleaſure while he ſpoke, "in

this flattering concurrence of our opinions! See, madam," taking from his pocket a letter, "how I have been this very morning occupied, in endeavouring to procure for Mr. Belfield ſome employment by which his education might be rendered uſeful, and his parts redound to his own credit and advantage."

He then broke the ſeal, and put into her hand a letter to a nobleman, whoſe ſon was ſoon going abroad, ſtrongly recommending Belfield to him in capacity of a tutor.

A ſympathy of ſentiment ſo ſtriking, impreſſed them at the ſame moment with ſurpriſe and eſteem: Delvile earneſtly regarded her with eyes of ſpeaking admiration, while the occaſion of his notice rendered it too pleaſant to diſtreſs her, and filled her with an inward ſatisfaction which brightened her whole countenance.

She had only time, in a manner that ſtrongly marked her approbation, to return the letter, before Mrs. Delvile again made her appearance.

During the reſt of the evening but little was ſaid; Cecilia was not talkative, and young Delvile was ſo abſent, that three times his mother reminded him of an engagement to meet his father, who that night was expected at the Duke of Derwent's houſe in town, before he heard that ſhe ſpoke to him, and

and three times more before, when he had heard, he obeyed.

Cecilia, when ſhe came back to Mr. Harrel's, found the houſe full of company. She went into the drawing-room, but did not remain there long; ſhe was grave and thoughtful, ſhe wiſhed to be alone, and by the earlieſt opportunity ſtole away to her own apartment.

Her mind was now occupied by new ideas, and her fancy was buſied in the delineation of new proſpects. She had been ſtruck from her firſt meeting young Delvile with an involuntary admiration of his manners and converſation; ſhe had found upon every ſucceeding interview ſomething farther to approve, and felt for him a riſing partiality which made her always ſee him with pleaſure, and never part from him without a wiſh to ſee him again. Yet, as ſhe was not of that inflammable nature which is always ready to take fire, as her paſſions were under the controul of her reaſon, and ſhe ſuffered not her affections to triumph over her principles, ſhe ſtarted at her danger the moment ſhe perceived it, and inſtantly determined to give no weak encouragement to a prepoſſeſſion which neither time nor intimacy had juſtified. She denied herſelf the deluding ſatisfaction of dwelling upon the ſuppoſition of his worth, was unuſually aſſiduous to occupy all her time, that her heart might have

leſs leiſure for imagination, and had ſhe found that his character degenerated from the promiſe of his appearance, the well-regulated purity of her mind would ſoon have enabled her to have driven him wholly from her thoughts.

Such was her ſituation when the circumſtances of her affairs occaſioned her becoming an inmate of his houſe; and here ſhe grew leſs guarded, becauſe leſs clear-ſighted to the danger of negligence, for the frequency of their converſations allowed her little time to conſider their effects. If at firſt ſhe had been pleaſed with his deportment and elegance, upon intimacy ſhe was charmed with his diſpoſition and his behaviour; ſhe found him manly, generous, open-hearted and amiable, fond of literature, delighting in knowledge, kind in his temper, and ſpirited in his actions.

Qualities ſuch as theſe, when recommended by high birth, a ſtriking figure, and poliſhed manners, formed but a dangerous companion for a young woman, who without the guard of any former prepoſſeſſion, was ſo fervent an admirer of excellence as Cecilia. Her heart made no reſiſtance, for the attack was too gentle and too gradual to alarm her vigilance, and therefore, though always ſenſible of the pleaſure ſhe received from his ſociety, it was not till ſhe returned to Portman Square, after having lived under

the ſame roof with him for a fortnight, that ſhe was conſcious her happineſs was no longer in her own power.

Mr. Harrel's houſe, which had never pleaſed her, now became utterly diſguſtful; ſhe was wearied and uncomfortable; yet, willing to attribute her uneaſineſs to any other than the true cauſe, ſhe fancied the houſe itſelf was changed, and that all its inhabitants and viſitors were more than uſually diſagreeable: but this idle error was of ſhort duration, the moment of ſelf-conviction was at hand, and when Delvile preſented her the letter he had written for Mr. Belfield, it flaſhed in her eyes!

This detection of the altered ſtate of her mind, opened to her views and her hopes a ſcene entirely new, for neither the exertion of the moſt active benevolence, nor the ſteady courſe of the moſt virtuous conduct, ſufficed any longer to wholly engage her thoughts, or conſtitute her felicity; ſhe had purpoſes that came nearer home, and cares that threatened to abſorb in themſelves that heart and thoſe faculties which hitherto had only ſeemed animated for the ſervice of others.

Yet this loſs of mental freedom gave her not much uneaſineſs, ſince the choice of her heart, though involuntary, was approved by her principles, and confirmed by her judgment. Young Delvile's ſituation in life was juſt what ſhe wiſhed, more elevated than her

own, yet not ſo exalted as to humble her with a ſenſe of inferiority; his connections were honourable, his mother appeared to her the firſt of women, his character and diſpoſition ſeemed formed to make her happy, and her own fortune was ſo large, that to the ſtate of his ſlie was indifferent.

Delighted with ſo flattering a union of inclination with propriety, ſhe now began to cheriſh the partiality ſhe at firſt had repreſſed, and thinking the future deſtination of her life already ſettled, looked forward with grateful joy to the proſpect of ending her days with the man ſhe thought moſt worthy to be entruſted with the diſpoſal of her fortune.

She had not, indeed, any certainty that the regard of young Delvile was reciprocal, but ſhe had every reaſon to believe he greatly admired her, and to ſuſpect that his miſtaken notion of her prior engagement, firſt with Mr. Belfield, and afterwards with Sir Robert Floyer, made him at preſent check thoſe ſentiments in her favour which, when that error was removed, ſhe hoped to ſee encouraged.

Her purpoſe, therefore, was quietly to wait an explanation, which ſhe rather wiſhed retarded, than forwarded, that her leiſure and opportunity might be more for inveſtigating his character, and ſaving herſelf from repentance.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

A CONFLICT.

THE day following this happy intellectual arrangement, Cecilia was visited by Mr. Monckton. That gentleman, who had enquired for her immediately after the Harrels went to their villa, and who had flattered himself with reaping much advantage from their abſence, by frequent meetings and confidential diſcourſes, ſuffered the ſevereſt mortification when he found that her ſtay in town rendered her not the leſs inacceſſible to him, ſince he had no perſonal acquaintance with the Delviles, and could not venture to preſent himſelf at their houſe.

He was now received by her with more than uſual pleaſure; the time had ſeemed long to her ſince ſhe had converſed with him, and ſhe was eager to aſk his counſel and aſſiſtance in her affairs. She related to him the motives which had induced her to go to St. James's-Square, and the incorrigible obſtinacy with which Mr. Harrel ſtill continued to encourage the addreſſes of Sir Robert Floyer; ſhe earneſtly entreated him to become her agent in a buſineſs to which

ſhe

ſhe was unequal, by expoſtulating in her cauſe with Mr. Harrel, and by calling upon Sir Robert himſelf to inſiſt upon his foregoing his unauthoriſed pretenſions.

Mr. Monckton liſtened eagerly to her account and requeſt, and when ſhe had finiſhed, aſſured her he would deliberate upon each circumſtance of the affair, and then maturely weigh every method he could deviſe, to extricate her from an embarraſſment which now grew far too ſerious to be ſafely neglected.

"I will not, however," continued he, "either act or give my opinion without farther enquiry, as I am confident there is a myſtery in this buſineſs which lies deeper than we can at preſent fathom. Mr. Harrel has doubtleſs purpoſes of his own to anſwer by this pretended zeal for Sir Robert; nor is it difficult to conjecture what they may be. Friendſhip, in a man of his light caſt, is a mere cover, a mere name, to conceal a connection, which has its baſis ſolely in the licentious convenience of borrowing money, going to the ſame gaming-houſe, and mutually communicating and boaſting their mutual vices and intrigues, while, all the time, their regard for each other is equally hollow with their regard for truth and integrity."

He then cautioned her to be extremely careful with reſpect to any money tranſactions with Mr. Harrel, whoſe ſplendid extravagance

travagance he assured her was universally known to exceed his fortune.

The countenance of Cecilia, during this exhortation, was testimony sufficient to the penetrating eyes of Mr. Monckton that his advice came not too soon: a suspicion of the real state of the case speedily occurred to him, and he questioned her minutely upon the subject. She endeavoured to avoid making him any answer, but his discernment was too keen for her artificial evasion, and he very soon gathered all the particulars of her transactions with Mr. Harrel.

He was less alarmed at the sum she had lent him, which was rather within his expectations, than at the method she had been induced to take to procure it. He represented to her in the strongest manner the danger of imposition, nay of ruin, from the extortions and the craft of money-lenders; and he charged her upon no consideration to be tempted or persuaded again to have recourse to such perilous expedients.

She promised the most attentive observance of his advice; and then told him the acquaintance she had made with Miss Belfield, and her sorrow for the situation of her brother; though, satisfied for the present with the plan of young Delvile, she now gave up her design of soliciting his counsel.

In the midst of this conversation, a note was delivered to her from Mr. Delvile senior,

acquainting her with his return to town, and begging the favour of her to call in St. James's-Square the next morning, as he wished to speak to her upon some business of importance.

The eager manner in which Cecilia accepted this invitation, and her repeated and earnest exclamation of wonder at what Mr. Delvile could have to say, past not unnoticed by Mr. Monckton; he instantly turned the discourse from the Belfields, the Harrels, and the Baronet, to enquire how she had spent her time during her visit in St. James's-Square, and what was her opinion of the family after her late opportunities of intimacy.

Cecilia answered that she had yet seen nothing more of Mr. Delvile, who had been absent the whole time, but with equal readiness and pleasure she replied to all his questions concerning his lady, expatiating with warmth and fervour upon her many rare and estimable qualities.

But when the same interrogatories were transferred to the son, she spoke no longer with the same ease, nor with her usual promptitude of sincerity; she was embarrassed, her answers were short, and she endeavoured to hasten from the subject.

Mr. Monckton remarked this change with the most apprehensive quickness, but forcing a smile, "Have you yet," he said, observed

the

the family compact in which thoſe people are bound to beſiege you and draw you into their ſnares."

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia, much hurt by the queſtion, "I am ſure no ſuch compact has been formed; and I am ſure, too, that if you knew them better, you would yourſelf be the firſt to admire and do them juſtice."

"My dear Miſs Beverley," cried he, "I know them already; I do not, indeed, viſit them, but I am perfectly acquainted with their characters, which have been drawn to me by thoſe who are moſt cloſely connected with them, and who have had opportunities of inſpection which I hope will never fall to your ſhare, ſince I am ſatisfied the trial would pain, though the proof would convince you."

"What then have you heard of them?" cried Cecilia, with much earneſtneſs; "it is, at leaſt, not poſſible any ill can be ſaid of Mrs. Delvile."

"I beg your pardon," returned he, "Mrs. Delvile is not nearer perfection than the reſt of her family, ſhe has only more art in diſguiſing her foibles; becauſe, tho' ſhe is the daughter of pride, ſhe is the ſlave of intereſt."

"I ſee you have been greatly miſinformed," ſaid Cecilia, warmly; "Mrs. Delvile is the nobleſt of women! ſhe may, indeed,

deed, from her very exaltation, have enemies, but they are the enemies of envy, not of reſentment, enemies raiſed by ſuperior merit, not excited by injury or provocation!"

"You will know her better hereafter;" ſaid Mr. Monckton, calmly, "I only hope your knowledge will not be purchaſed by the ſacrifice of your happineſs."

"And what knowledge of her, Sir," cried Cecilia, ſtarting, "can have power to put my happineſs in any danger?"

"I will tell you," anſwered he, "with all the openneſs you have a claim to from my regard, and then leave to time to ſhew if I am miſtaken. The Delvile family, notwithſtanding its oſtentatious magnificence, I can ſolemnly aſſure you, is poor in every branch, alike lineal and collateral."

"But is it therefore the leſs eſtimable?"

"Yes, becauſe the more rapacious. And while they count on each ſide Dukes, Earls and Barons in their genealogy, the very wealth with which, through your means, they project the ſupport of their inſolence, and which they will graſp with all the greedineſs of avarice, they will think honoured by being employed in their ſervice, while the inſtrument, all amiable as ſhe is, by which they attain it, will be conſtantly held down as the diſgrace of their alliance."

Cecilia, ſtung to the ſoul by this ſpeech,

roſe

roſe from her chair, unwilling to anſwer it, yet unable to conceal how much it ſhocked her. Mr. Monckton, perceiving her emotion, followed her, and taking her hand, ſaid, "I would not give this warning to one I thought too weak to profit from it; but as I am well informed of the uſe that is meant to be made of your fortune, and the abuſe that will follow of yourſelf, I think it right to prepare you for their artifices, which merely to point out may render abortive."

Cecilia, too much diſturbed to thank him, drew back her hand, and continued ſilent. Mr. Monckton, reading through her diſpleaſure the ſtate of her affections, ſaw with terror the greatneſs of the danger which threatened him. He found, however, that the preſent was no time for enforcing objections, and perceiving he had already gone too far, though he was by no means diſpoſed to recant, he thought it moſt prudent to retreat, and let her meditate upon his exhortation while its impreſſion was yet ſtrong in her mind.

He would now, therefore, have taken leave; but Cecilia, endeavouring to recollect herſelf, and fully perſuaded that however he had ſhocked her, he had only her intereſt in view, ſtopt him, ſaying, "You think me, perhaps, ungrateful, but believe me I am not; I muſt, however, acknowledge, that your cenſure of Mrs. Delvile hurts

me

me extremely. Indeed I cannot doubt her worthineſs; I muſt ſtill, therefore, plead for her, and I hope the time will come when you will allow I have not pleaded unjuſtly."

"Juſtly or unjuſtly," anſwered Mr. Monckton, "I am at leaſt ſure you can never plead vainly. I give up, therefore, to your opinion my attack of Mrs. Delvile, and am willing from your commendations to ſuppoſe her the beſt of the race. Nay, I will even own that perhaps Mr. Delvile himſelf, as well as his lady, might paſs through life and give but little offence, had they only themſelves to think of, and no ſon to ſtimulate their arrogance."

"Is the ſon, then," ſaid Cecilia, faintly, "ſo much the moſt culpable?"

"The ſon, I believe," anſwered he, "is at leaſt the chief incentive to inſolence and oſtentation in the parents, ſince it is for his ſake they covet with ſuch avidity honours and riches, ſince they plume themſelves upon regarding him as the ſupport of their name and family, and ſince their pride in him even ſurpaſſes their pride in their lineage and themſelves."

"Ah! thought Cecilia, and of ſuch a ſon who could help being proud!"

"Their purpoſe, therefore," he continued, "is to ſecure through his means your fortune, which they will no ſooner obtain, than, *to my* certain knowledge, they mean inſtantly, and

and moſt unmercifully, to employ it in repairing all their dilapidated eſtates.

And then he quitted the ſubject, and, with that guarded warmth which accompanied all his expreſſions, told her he would carefully watch for her honour and welfare, and, repeating his promiſe of endeavouring to diſcover the tie by which Mr. Harrel ſeemed bound to the Baronet, he left her—a prey himſelf to an anxiety yet more ſevere than that with which he had filled her! He now ſaw all his long-cheriſhed hopes in danger of final deſtruction, and ſuddenly caſt upon the brink of a precipice, where, while he ſtruggled to protect them from falling, his eyes were dazzled by beholding them totter.

Mean while Cecilia, diſturbed from the calm of ſoft ſerenity to which ſhe had yielded every avenue of her ſoul, now looked forward with diſtreſs and uneaſineſs, even to the completion of the views which but a few minutes before had compriſed all her notions of felicity. The alliance which ſo lately had ſeemed wholly unexceptionable, now appeared teeming with objections, and threatening with difficulties. The repreſentations of Mr. Monckton had cruelly mortified her; well acquainted with his knowledge of the world, and wholly unſuſpicious of his ſelfiſh motives, ſhe gave to his aſſertions involuntary credit, and even while ſhe attempted to com-

bat

bat them, they made upon her mind an impreſſion ſcarce ever to be eraſed.

Full, therefore, of doubt and inquietude, ſhe paſſed the night in diſcomfort and irreſolution, now determining to give way to her feelings, and now to be wholly governed by the counſel of Mr. Monckton.

CHAP. XI.

An Expectation.

IN this diſpoſition of mind Cecilia the next morning obeyed the ſummons of Mr. Delvile, and for the firſt time went to St. James's-Square in a humour to look for evil inſtead of good, and meanneſs inſtead of nobleneſs.

She was ſhewn into an apartment where ſhe found Mr. Delvile alone, and was received by him, as uſual, with the moſt ſtately ſolemnity.

When ſhe was ſeated, "I have given you, Miſs Beverley," ſaid he, "the trouble of calling, in order to diſcuſs with you the internal ſtate of your affairs, a duty which, at this juncture, I hold to be incumbent upon my character. The delicacy due to

your

your ſex would certainly have induced me to wait upon you myſelf for this purpoſe, but for the reaſons I have already hinted to you, of fearing the people with whom you live might think it neceſſary to return my viſit. Perſons of low origin are commonly in thoſe matters the moſt forward. Not, however, that I would prejudice you againſt them; though, for myſelf, it is fit I remember that a general and indiſcriminate acquaintance, by levelling all ranks, does injury to the rites of ſociety."

Ah! thought Cecilia, how infallible is Mr. Monckton! and how inevitably, in a family of which Mr. Delvile is the head, ſhould I be cruelly *held down as the diſgrace of their alliance!*

"I have applied," continued he, "to Mrs. Delvile, to know if the communication which I had recommended to you, and to which ſhe had promiſed her attention, had yet paſſed; but I am informed you have not ſpoken to her upon the ſubject."

"I had nothing, Sir, to communicate," anſwered Cecilia, "and I had hoped, as Mrs. Delvile made no enquiries, ſhe was ſatisfied ſhe had nothing to hear."

"With reſpect to enquiries," ſaid Mr. Delvile, "I fear you are not ſufficiently aware of the diſtance between a lady of Mrs. Delvile's rank, both by birth and alliance, and ſuch a young woman as Mrs. Harrel,

whoſe

whoſe anceſtors, but a ſhort time ſince, were mere Suffolk farmers. But I beg your pardon;—— I mean not any reflection upon yours: I have always heard they were very worthy people. And a farmer is certainly a very reſpectable perſon. Your father, I think, no more than the Dean your uncle, did nothing in that way himſelf?"

"No, Sir," ſaid Cecilia drily, and much provoked by this contemptuous courteſy.

"I have always been told he was a very good ſort of man: I knew none of the family myſelf, but the Dean. His connections with the Biſhop of ——, my relation, put him often in my way. Though his naming me for one of his truſtees, I muſt own, was rather extraordinary; but I mean not to hurt you; on the contrary, I ſhould be much concerned to give you any uneaſineſs."

Again Mr. Monckton aroſe in the mind of Cecilia, and again ſhe acknowledged the truth of his ſtrictures; and though ſhe much wondered in what an harangue ſo pompous was to end, her diſguſt ſo far conquered her curioſity, that without hearing it ſhe wiſhed herſelf away.

"To return," ſaid he, "to my purpoſe. The preſent period of your life is ſuch as to render advice particularly ſeaſonable; I am ſorry, therefore, as I before ſaid, you have not diſcloſed your ſituation to Mrs. Delville. A young lady on the point of making an eſtabliſhment,

eſtabliſhment, and with many engagements in her power, is extremely liable to be miſtaken in her judgment, and therefore ſhould ſolicit inſtruction from thoſe who are able to acquaint her what connection would be moſt to her advantage. One thing, however, I am happy to commend, the young man who was wounded in the duel —— I cannot recollect his name —— is, I hear, totally out of the queſtion."

What next? thought Cecilia; though ſtill ſhe gave him no interruption, for the haughtineſs of his manner was repulſive to reply.

"My deſign, therefore, is to ſpeak to you of Sir Robert Floyer. When I had laſt the pleaſure of addreſſing you upon this ſubject, you may probably remember my voice was in his favour; but I then regarded him merely as the rival of an inconſiderable young man, to reſcue you from whom he appeared an eligible perſon. The affair is now altered, that young man is thought of no more, and another rival comes forward, to whom Sir Robert is as inconſiderable as the firſt rival was to Sir Robert."

Cecilia ſtarted at this information, livelier ſenſations ſtimulated her curioſity, and ſurmiſes in which ſhe was moſt deeply intereſted quickened her attention.

"This rival," proceeded he, "I ſhould imagine no young lady would a moment heſitate in electing; he is every way the ſu-

perior of Sir Robert except in fortune, and the deficiencies of that the ſplendour of your own may amply ſupply."

The deepeſt crimſon now tinged the cheeks of Cecilia; the prophecy of Mr. Monckton ſeemed immediately fulfilling, and ſhe trembled with a riſing conflict between her approbation of the offer, and her dread of its conſequences.

"I know not, indeed," continued he, "in what eſtimation you may have been accuſtomed to hold rank and connection, nor whether you are impreſſed with a proper ſenſe of their ſuperiority and value; for early prejudices are not eaſily rooted out, and thoſe who have lived chiefly with monied people, regard even birth itſelf as unimportant when compared with wealth."

The colour which firſt glowed in the cheeks of Cecilia from expectation, now roſe yet higher from reſentment: ſhe thought herſelf already inſulted by a prelude ſo oſtentatious and humiliating to the propoſals which were to follow; and ſhe angrily determined, with whatever pain to her heart, to aſſert her own dignity, by refuſing them at once, too well ſatisfied by what ſhe now ſaw of the preſent, that Mr. Monckton had been juſt in his prediction of the future.

"Your rejection, therefore," continued he, "of this honourable offer, may perhaps have been merely the conſequence of the principles

principles in which you have been educated.—"

"Rejection?" interrupted Cecilia, amazed, "what rejection, Sir?"

"Have you not refuſed the propoſals of my Lord Ernolf for his ſon?"

"Lord Ernolf? never! nor have I ever ſeen either his Lordſhip or his ſon but in public."

"That," replied Mr. Delvile, "is little to the purpoſe; where the connection is a proper one, a young lady of delicacy has only to accede to it. But though this rejection came not immediately from yourſelf, it had doubtleſs your concurrence."

"It had not, Sir, even my knowledge."

"Your alliance then with Sir Robert Floyer is probably nearer a concluſion than I had imagined, for otherwiſe Mr. Harrel would not, without conſulting you, have given the Earl ſo determinate an anſwer."

"No, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, impatiently, "my alliance with him was never more diſtant, nor do I mean it ſhould ever approach more near."

She was now little diſpoſed for farther converſation. Her heroic deſign of refuſing young Delvile by no means reconciled her to the diſcovery ſhe now made that he had not meant to addreſs her; and though ſhe was provoked and fretted at this new proof that Mr. Harrel ſcrupled neither aſſertions

nor actions to make her engagement with Sir Robert credited, her diſappointment in finding that Mr. Delvile, inſtead of pleading the cauſe of his ſon, was exerting his intereſt for another perſon, affected her ſo much more nearly, that notwithſtanding he ſtill continued his parading harangue, ſhe ſcarcely knew even the ſubject of his diſcourſe, and ſeized the firſt opportunity of a ceſſation to riſe and take her leave.

He aſked her if ſhe would not call upon Mrs. Delvile: but deſirous to be alone, ſhe declined the invitation: he then charged her to proceed no farther with Sir Robert till he had made ſome enquiries concerning Lord Ernolf, and graciouſly promiſing his protection and counſel, ſuffered her to depart.

Cecilia now perceived ſhe might plan her rejections, or ſtudy her dignity at her leiſure, for neither Mr. Delvile nor his ſon ſeemed in any haſte to put her fortitude to the proof. With regard, therefore, to their plots and intentions, Mr. Monckton ſhe found was wrong, but with reſpect to their conduct and ſentiments, ſhe had every reaſon to believe him right: and though her heart refuſed to rejoice in eſcaping a trial of its ſtrength, her judgment was ſo well convinced that his painting was from the life, that ſhe determined to conquer her partiality for young Delvile, ſince ſhe looked forward to nothing but mortification in a connexion with his *family*.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

An Agitation.

WITH this intention, and every faculty of her mind abſorbed in reflecting upon the reaſons which gave riſe to it, ſhe returned to Portman-Square.

As her chair was carried into the hall, ſhe obſerved, with ſome alarm, a look of conſternation among the ſervants, and an appearance of confuſion in the whole houſe. She was proceeding to her own room, intending to enquire of her maid if any evil had happened, when ſhe was croſſed upon the ſtairs by Mr. Harrel, who paſſed her with an air ſo wild and perturbed, that he hardly ſeemed to know her.

Frightened and amazed, ſhe ſtopt ſhort, irreſolute which way to go; but, haſtily returning, he beckoned her to follow him.

She obeyed, and he led her to the library. He then ſhut the door, and abruptly ſeizing her hand, called out, "Miſs Beverley, I am ruined!—I am undone!—I am blaſted for ever!"

"I hope not, Sir!" ſaid Cecilia, extremely terrified, "I hope not! Where is Mrs. Harrel?"

"O I know not! I know not!" cried he, in a frantic manner, "but I have not ſeen her,—I cannot ſee her,—I hope I ſhall never ſee her more!—"

"O fie! fie!" ſaid Cecilia, "let me call her, I beg; you ſhould conſult with her in this diſtreſs, and ſeek comfort from her affection."

"From her affection?" repeated he, fiercely, "from her hatred you mean! Do you not know that ſhe, too, is ruined? Oh paſt redemption ruined!—and yet that I ſhould heſitate, that I ſhould a moment heſitate, to conclude the whole buſineſs at once!"

"How dreadful!" cried Cecilia, "what horrible thing has happened?"

"I have undone Priſcilla!" cried he, "I have blaſted my credit! I have deſtroyed—no, not yet quite deſtroyed myſelf!"

"O yet not ever!" cried Cecilia, whoſe agitation now almoſt equalled his own, "be not ſo deſperate, I conjure you! ſpeak to me more intelligibly,—what does all this mean? How has it come to paſs?"

"My debts!—my creditors!—one way only," ſtriking his hand upon his forehead, "is left for me!"

"*Do* not ſay ſo, Sir!" ſaid Cecilia, "you ſhall

ſhall find many ways; pray have courage! pray ſpeak calmly; and if you will but be more prudent, will but, in future, better regulate your affairs, I will myſelf undertake——"

She ſtopt; checked in the full career of her overflowing compaſſion, by a ſenſe of the worthleſſneſs of its object; and by the remembrance of the injunctions of Mr. Monckton.

"What will you undertake?" cried he, eagerly, "I know you are an angel!—tell me what will you undertake?"

"I will,—" ſaid Cecilia, heſitating, "I will ſpeak to Mr. Monckton,—I will conſult——"

"You may as well conſult with every curſed creditor in the houſe!" interrupted he; "but do ſo, if you pleaſe; my diſgrace muſt perforce reach him ſoon, and a ſhort anticipation is not worth begging off."

"Are your creditors then actually in the houſe?"

"O yes, yes! and therefore it is high time I ſhould be out of it!—Did you not ſee them?—Do they not line the hall?—They threaten me with three executions before night!—three executions, unleſs I ſatisfy their immediate demands!—"

"And to what do their demands amount?"

"I know not!—I dare not aſk—to ſome

thousand pounds, perhaps,—and I have not, at this minute, forty guineas in the house!"

"Nay, then," cried Cecilia, retreating, "I can indeed do nothing! if their demands are so high, I *ought* to do nothing."

She would then have quitted him, not more shocked at his situation, than indignant at the wilful extravagance which had occasioned it.

"Stay," cried he, "and hear me!" then lowering his voice, "seek out," he continued, "your unfortunate friend,—go to the poor ruined Priscilla,—prepare her for tidings of horror! and do not, though you renounce Me, do not abandon Her!"

Then fiercely passing her, he was himself leaving the room; but Cecilia, alarmed by the fury of his manner, called out, "What is it you mean? what tidings of horror? whither are you going?"

"To hell!" cried he, and rushed out of the apartment.

Cecilia screamed aloud, and conjuring him to hear her, ran after him; he paid her no regard, but, flying faster than she had power to pursue, reached his own dressing-room, shut himself into it with violence, and just as she arrived at the door, turned the key, and bolted it.

Her terror was now inexpressible; she believed him in the very act of suicide, and her refusal of assistance seemed the signal for the deed:

deed! her whole fortune, at that moment, was valueleſs and unimportant to her, compared with the preſervation of a fellow-creature: ſhe called out with all the vehemence of agony to beg he would open the door, and eagerly promiſed by all that was ſacred to do every thing in her power to ſave him.

At theſe words he opened it; his face was totally without colour, and he graſped a razor in his hand.

"You have ſtopt me," ſaid he, in a voice ſcarce audible, "at the very moment I had gathered courage for the blow: but if indeed you will aſſiſt me, I will ſhut this up,—if not, I will ſteep it in my blood!"

"I will! I will!" cried Cecilia, "I will do every thing you deſire!"

"And quickly?"

"Immediately."

"Before my diſgrace is known? and while all may yet be huſhed up?"

"Yes, yes! all—any—every thing you wiſh!"

"Swear then!"

Here Cecilia drew back; her recollection returned as her terror abated, and her repugnance to enter into an engagement for ſhe know not what, with a man whoſe actions ſhe condemned, and whoſe principles ſhe abhorred, made all her fright now give way to indignation, and, after a ſhort pauſe, ſhe

angrily anſwered, "No, Sir, I will not ſwear!—but yet, all that is reaſonable, all that is friendly——"

"Hear *me* ſwear, then!" interrupted he, furiouſly, "which at this moment I do, by every thing eternal, and by every thing infernal, that I will not outlive the ſeizure of my property, and that the moment I am informed there is an execution in my houſe, ſhall be the laſt of my exiſtence!"

"What cruelty, what compulſion! what impiety!" cried Cecilia: "give me, however, that horrible inſtrument, and preſcribe to me what conditions you pleaſe."

A noiſe was now heard below ſtairs, at which Cecilia, who had not dared call for help leſt ſhe ſhould quicken his deſperation, was ſecretly beginning to rejoice, when, ſtarting at the ſound, he exclaimed, "I believe you are too late!—the ruffians have already ſeized my houſe!" then endeavouring to force her out of the room, "Go," he cried, "to my wife;—I want to be alone!"

"Oh give me firſt," cried ſhe, "that weapon, and I will take what oath you pleaſe!"

"No, no!—go,—leave me,—" cried he, almoſt breathleſs with emotion, "I muſt not now be trifled with."

"I do not trifle! indeed I do not!" cried Cecilia holding by his arm: "try, put me to *the proof!*"

"Swear,

"Swear, ſolemnly ſwear, to empty my houſe of theſe creditors this moment!"

"I *do* ſwear," cried ſhe, with energy, "and Heaven proſper me as I am ſincere!"

"I ſee, I ſee you are an angel!" cried he, rapturouſly, "and as ſuch I worſhip and adore you! O you have reſtored me to life, and reſcued me from perdition!"

"Give me, then, that fatal inſtrument!"

"That inſtrument," returned he, "is nothing, ſince ſo many others are in my power; but you have now taken from me all deſire of uſing them. Go, then, and ſtop thoſe wretches from coming to me—ſend immediately for the Jew!—he will advance what money you pleaſe,—my man knows where to find him;—conſult with Mr. Arnott,—ſpeak a word of comfort to Priſcilla,—but do nothing, nothing at all, till you have cleared my houſe of thoſe curſed ſcoundrels!"

Cecilia, whoſe heart ſunk within her at the ſolemn promiſe ſhe had given, the mention of the Jew, and the arduous taſk ſhe had undertaken, quitted him without reply, and was going to her own room, to compoſe her hurried ſpirits, and conſider what ſteps ſhe had to take, when hearing the noiſe in the hall grow louder, ſhe ſtopt to liſten, and catching ſome words that greatly alarmed her, went half way down ſtairs, when ſhe was met by Daviſon, Mr. Harrel's man, of

whom she enquired into the occasion of the disturbance.

He answered that he must go immediately to his master, for the bailiffs were coming into the house.

"Let him not know it if you value his life!" cried she, with new terror. "Where is Mr. Arnott? call him to me—beg him to come this moment;—I will wait for him here."

The man flew to obey her: and Cecilia, finding she had time neither for deliberation nor regret, and dreading lest Mr. Harrel, by hearing of the arrival of the bailiffs, should relapse into despair, determined to call to her aid all the courage, prudence, and judgment she possessed, and since to act she was compelled, endeavoured with her best ability, to save his credit and retrieve his affairs.

The moment Mr. Arnott came, she ordered Davison to hasten to his master, and watch his motions.

Then addressing Mr. Arnott, "Will you, Sir," she said, "go and tell those people that if they will instantly quit the house, every thing shall be settled, and Mr. Harrel will satisfy their demands?"

"Ah, madam!" cried Mr. Arnott, mournfully, "and how? he has no means to pay them, and I have none—without ruin to myself,—to help him!"

"*Send* them but away," said Cecilia, "and

"and I will myſelf be your ſecurity that your promiſe ſhould not be diſgraced."

"Alas, madam," cried he, "what are you doing? well as I wiſh to Mr. Harrel, miſerable as I am for my unfortunate ſiſter, I yet cannot bear that ſuch goodneſs, ſuch beneficence ſhould be injured!"

Cecilia, however, perſiſted, and with evident reluctance he obeyed her.

While ſhe waited his return, Daviſon came from Mr. Harrel, who had ordered him to run inſtantly for the Jew.

Good Heaven, thought Cecilia, that a man ſo wretchedly ſelfiſh and worldly, ſhould dare, with all his guilt upon his head,

To ruſh, unlicenced on eternity!*

Mr. Arnott was more than half an hour with the people; and when, at laſt, he returned, his countenance immediately proclaimed the ill ſucceſs of his errand. The creditors, he ſaid, declared they had ſo frequently been deceived, that they would not diſmiſs the bailiffs, or retire themſelves, without actual payment.

"Tell them, then, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "to ſend me their accounts, and, if it be poſſible, I will diſcharge them directly."

Mr. Arnott's eyes were filled with tears at this declaration, and he proteſted, be the

* Maſon's Elfrida.

conſequence

conſequence to himſelf what it might, he would pay away every ſhilling he was worth, rather than witneſs ſuch injuſtice.

"No," cried Cecilia, exerting more ſpirit, that ſhe might ſhock him leſs, "I did not ſave Mr. Harrel, to deſtroy ſo much better a man! you have ſuffered but too much oppreſſion already; the preſent evil is mine; and from me, at leaſt, none I hope will ever ſpread to Mr. Arnott."

Mr. Arnott could not bear this; he was ſtruck with grief, with admiration, and with gratitude, and finding his tears now refuſed to be reſtrained, he went to execute her commiſſion in ſilent dejection.

The dejection, however, was encreaſed, though his tears were diſperſed, when he returned; "Oh, madam!" he cried, "all your efforts, generous as they are, will be of no avail! the bills even now in the houſe amount to more than 7000*l.*!"

Cecilia, amazed and confounded, ſtarted and claſped her hands, calling out, "What muſt I do! to what have I bound myſelf! and how can I anſwer to my conſcience,—to my ſucceſſors, ſuch a diſpoſal, ſuch an abuſe of ſo large a part of my fortune!"

Mr. Arnott could make no anſwer; and they ſtood looking at each other in ſilent irreſolution, till Daviſon brought intelligence that the Jew was already come, and waited to *ſpeak* with her.

"And

"And what can I ſay to him?" cried ſhe, more and more agitated; "I underſtand nothing of uſury; how am I to deal with him?"

Mr. Arnott then confeſſed that he ſhould himſelf have inſtantly been bail for his brother, but that his fortune, originally not large, was now ſo much impaired by the many debts which from time to time he had paid for him, that as he hoped ſome day to have a family of his own, he dared not run a riſk by which he might be utterly ruined, and the leſs, as his ſiſter had at Violet-Bank been prevailed upon to give up her ſettlement.

This account, which explained the late uneaſineſs of Mrs. Harrel, ſtill encreaſed the diſtreſs of Cecilia; and every moment ſhe obtained for reflection, augmented her reluctance to parting with ſo large a ſum of money for ſo worthleſs an object, and added ſtrength to her reſentment for the unjuſtifiable menaces which had extorted from her ſuch a promiſe. Yet not an inſtant would ſhe liſten to Mr. Arnott's offer of fulfilling her engagement, and charged him, as ſhe conſidered her own ſelf-eſteem worth her keeping, not to urge to her a propoſal ſo ungenerous and ſelfiſh.

Daviſon now came again to haſten her, and ſaid that the Jew was with his maſter, and they both impatiently expected her.

Cecilia, half diſtracted with her uncer-

tainty

tainty how to act, changed colour at this meſſage, and exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Arnott, run I beſeech you for Mr. Monckton! bring him hither directly—if any body can ſave me it is him; but if I go back to Mr. Harrel, I know it will be all over!"

"Certainly," ſaid Mr. Arnott, "I will run to him this moment."

"Yet no!—ſtop!—" cried the trembling Cecilia, "he can now do me no good,—his counſel will arrive too late to ſerve me,—it cannot call back the oath I have given!—it cannot compulſatory as it was, make me break it, and not be miſerable for ever!"

This idea ſufficed to determine her, and the apprehenſion of ſelf-reproach, ſhould the threat of Mr. Harrel be put in execution, was more inſupportable to her blameleſs and upright mind, than any loſs or diminution which her fortune could ſuſtain.

Slowly, however, with tardy and unwilling ſteps, her judgment repugnant, and her ſpirit repining, ſhe obeyed the ſummons of Mr. Harrel, who, impatient of her delay, came forward to meet her.

"Miſs Beverley," he cried, "there is not a moment to be loſt; this good man will bring you any ſum of money, upon a proper conſideration, that you will command; but if he is not immediately commiſſioned, and *theſe* curſed fellows are not got out of my houſe,

houſe, the affair will be blown, —— and what will follow," added he, lowering his voice, "I will not again frighten you by repeating, though I ſhall never recant."

Cecilia turned from him in horror; and, with a faultering voice and heavy heart, entreated Mr. Arnott to ſettle for her with the Jew.

Large as was the ſum, ſhe was ſo near being of age, and her ſecurity was ſo good, that the tranſaction was ſoon finiſhed: 7500*l.* was received of the Jew, Mr. Harrel gave Cecilia his bond for the payment, the creditors were ſatisfied, the bailiffs were diſmiſſed, and the houſe was ſoon reſtored to its cuſtomary appearance of ſplendid gaiety.

Mrs. Harrel, who during this ſcene had ſhut herſelf up in her own room to weep and lament, now flew to Cecilia, and in a tranſport of joy and gratitude, thanked her upon her knees for thus preſerving her from utter ruin: the gentle Mr. Arnott ſeemed uncertain whether moſt to grieve or rejoice; and Mr. Harrel repeatedly proteſted ſhe ſhould have the ſole guidance of his future conduct.

This promiſe, the hope of his amendment, and the joy ſhe had expanded, ſomewhat revived the ſpirits of Cecilia; who, however, deeply affected by what had paſſed, haſtened from them all to her own room.

She had now parted with 8050*l.* to Mr. Harrel, without any ſecurity when or how it was

was to be paid; and that ardour of benevolence which taught her to value her riches merely as they enabled her to do good and generous actions, was here of no avail to console or reward her, for her gift was compelled, and its receiver was all but deteſted. "How much better," cried ſhe, "would this have been beſtowed upon the amiable Miſs Belfield! or upon her noble-minded, though proud-ſpirited brother! and how much deſs a ſum would have made the virtuous and induſtrious Hills eaſy and happy for life! but here, to become the tool of the extravagance I abhor! to be made reſponſible for the luxury I condemn! to be liberal in oppoſition to my principles, and laviſh in defiance of my judgment!—Oh that my much deceived uncle had better known to what dangerous hands he committed me! and that my weak and unhappy friend had met with a worthier protector of her virtue and ſafety!"

As ſoon, however, as ſhe recovered from the firſt ſhock of her reflections, ſhe turned her thoughts from herſelf to the formation of ſome plan that might, at leaſt, render her donation of ſerious and laſting uſe. The ſignal ſervice ſhe had juſt done them gave her at preſent an aſcendancy over the Harrels, which ſhe hoped, if immediately exerted, might prevent the return of ſo calamitous a ſcene, by engaging them both to

an

an immediate change of conduct. But unequal herself to contriving expedients for this purpose that might not easily be controverted, she determined to send the next morning a petition to Mr. Monckton to call upon her, reveal to him the whole transaction, and entreat him to suggest to her what, with most probability of success, she might offer to their consideration.

While this was passing in her mind, on the evening of the day in which she had so dearly purchased the right of giving counsel, she was summoned to tea.

She found Mr. Harrel and his lady engaged in earnest discourse: as soon as she appeared, the former cried, "My dear Miss Beverley, after the extraordinary kindness you have shewn me this morning, you will not, I am sure, deny me one trifling favour which I mean to ask this evening."

"No," said Mrs. Harrel, "that I am sure she will not, when she knows that our future appearance in the world depends upon her granting it."

"I hope then," said Cecilia, "I shall not wish to refuse it."

"It is nothing in the world," said Mr. Harrel, "but to go with us to night to the Pantheon."

Cecilia was struck with the utmost indignation at this proposal, that the man who in the morning had an execution in his house,

houſe, ſhould languiſh in the evening for the amuſement of a public place,—that he who, but a few hours before was plunging uncalled into eternity, ſhould, while the intended inſtrument of death, was yet ſcarce cold from the graſp of his hand, deliberately court a return of his diſtreſs, by inſtantly recurring to the methods which had involved him in it, irritated and ſhocked her beyond even a wiſh of diſguiſing her diſpleaſure, and therefore, after an expreſſive ſilence, ſhe gave a cold, but abſolute denial.

"I ſee," ſaid Mr. Harrel, ſomewhat confuſed, "you do not underſtand the motives of our requeſt. The unfortunate affair of this morning is very likely to ſpread preſently all over the town; the only refutation that can be given to it, is by our all appearing in public before any body knows whether to believe it or not."

"Do, my deareſt friend," cried his lady, "oblige me by your compliance; indeed our whole reputation depends upon it. I made an engagement yeſterday to go with Mrs. Mears, and if I diſappoint her, every body will be gueſſing the reaſon."

"At leaſt," anſwered Cecilia, "*my* going can anſwer no purpoſe to you: pray, therefore, do not aſk me; I am ill diſpoſed for ſuch ſort of amuſement, and have by no means your opinion of its neceſſity."

"But if we do not *all* go," ſaid Mr. Harrel,

rel, "we do almoſt nothing: you are known to live with us, and your appearance at this critical time is important to our credit. If this misfortune gets wind, the conſequence is, that every dirty tradeſman in town to whom I owe a ſhilling, will be forming the ſame curſed combination thoſe ſcoundrels formed this morning, of coming in a body, and waiting for their money, or elſe bringing an execution into my houſe. The only way to ſilence report is by putting a good face upon the matter at once, and ſhewing ourſelves to the world as if nothing had happened. Favour us, therefore, to-night with your company, which is really important to us, or ten to one, but in another fortnight I ſhall be juſt in the ſame ſcrape."

Cecilia, however incenſed at this intelligence that his debts were ſtill ſo numerous, felt now as much alarmed at the mention of an execution, as if ſhe was in actual danger of ruin herſelf. Terrified, therefore, though not convinced, ſhe yielded to their perſuaſions, and conſented to accompany them.

They ſoon after ſeparated to make ſome alteration in their dreſs, and then, calling in their way for Mrs. Mears, they proceeded to the Pantheon.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

A MAN OF THE TON.

AT the door of the Pantheon they were joined by Mr. Arnott and Sir Robert Floyer, whom Cecilia now ſaw with added averſion: they entered the great room during the ſecond act of the Concert, to which, as no one of the party but herſelf had any deſire to liſten, no ſort of attention was paid; the ladies entertaining themſelves as if no Orcheſtra was in the room, and the gentlemen, with an equal diſregard to it, ſtruggling for a place by the fire, about which they continued hovering till the muſic was over.

Soon after they were ſeated, Mr. Meadows, ſauntering towards them, whiſpered ſomething to Mrs. Mears, who, immediately riſing, introduced him to Cecilia; after which, the place next to her being vacant, he caſt himſelf upon it, and lolling as much at his eaſe as his ſituation would permit, began ſomething like a converſation with her.

"Have you been long in town, ma'am?"

"No, Sir."

"This is not your firſt winter?"

"Of being in town, it is."

"Then you have ſomething new to ſee: O charm-

O charming! how I envy you!—Are you pleaſed with the Pantheon?"

"Very much; I have ſeen no building at all equal to it."

"You have not been abroad. Travelling is the ruin of all happineſs! There's no looking at a building here after ſeeing Italy."

"Does all happineſs, then, depend upon ſight of buildings?" ſaid Cecilia, when, turning towards her companion, ſhe perceived him yawning with ſuch evident inattention to her anſwer, that not chuſing to interrupt his reverie, ſhe turned her head another way.

For ſome minutes he took no notice of this; and then, as if ſuddenly recollecting himſelf, he called out haſtily, "I beg your pardon, ma'am, you were ſaying ſomething?"

"No, Sir, nothing worth repeating."

"O pray don't puniſh me ſo ſeverely as not to let me hear it!"

Cecilia, though merely not to ſeem offended at his negligence, was then again beginning an anſwer, when looking at him as ſhe ſpoke, ſhe perceived that he was biting his nails with ſo abſent an air, that he appeared not to know he had aſked any queſtion. She therefore broke off, and left him to his cogitation.

Some time after he addreſſed her again, ſaying, "Don't you find this place extremely tireſome, ma'am?"

"Yes,

"Yes, Sir," ſaid ſhe, half laughing, "it is, indeed, not very entertaining!"

"Nothing is entertaining," anſwered he, "for two minutes together. Things are ſo little different one from another, that there is no making pleaſure out of any thing. We go the ſame dull round for ever; nothing new, no variety! all the ſame thing over again! Are you fond of public places, ma'am?"

"Yes, Sir, *ſoberly*, as Lady Grace ſays."

"Then I envy you extremely, for you have ſome amuſement always in your own power. How deſirable that is!"

"And have not you the ſame reſources?"

"O no! I am tired to death! tired of every thing! I would give the univerſe for a diſpoſition leſs difficult to pleaſe. Yet, after all, what is there to give pleaſure? When one has ſeen one thing, one has ſeen every thing. O, 'tis heavy work! Don't you find it ſo, ma'am?"

This ſpeech was ended with ſo violent a fit of yawning, that Cecilia would not trouble herſelf to anſwer it: but her ſilence, as before, paſſed wholly unnoticed, exciting neither queſtion nor comment.

A long pauſe now ſucceeded, which he broke at laſt, by ſaying, as he writhed himſelf about upon his ſeat, "Theſe forms would be much more agreeable if there were backs to them. 'Tis intolerable to be forced to ſit like

like a ſchool-boy. The firſt ſtudy of life is eaſe. There is, indeed, no other ſtudy that pays the trouble of attainment. Don't you think ſo, ma'am?"

"But may not even that," ſaid Cecilia, "by ſo much ſtudy, become labour?"

"I am vaſtly happy you think ſo."

"Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I thought you ſaid —— I really beg your pardon, but I was thinking of ſomething elſe."

"You did very right, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, laughing, "for what I ſaid by no means merited any attention."

"Will you do me the favour to repeat it?" cried he, taking out his glaſs to examine ſome lady at a diſtance.

"O no," ſaid Cecilia, "that would be trying your patience too ſeverely."

"Theſe glaſſes ſhew one nothing but defects," ſaid he; "I am ſorry they were ever invented. They are the ruin of all beauty; no complexion can ſtand them. I believe that ſolo will never be over! I hate a ſolo; it ſinks, it depreſſes me intolerably."

"You will preſently, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, looking at the bill of the concert, "have a full piece; and that, I hope, will revive you."

"A full piece! oh inſupportable! it ſtuns, it fatigues, it overpowers me beyond endurance! no taſte in it, no delicacy, no room for the ſmalleſt feeling."

"Perhaps, then, you are only fond of singing?"

"I should be, if I could hear it; but we are now so miserably off in voices, that I hardly ever attempt to listen to a song, without fancying myself deaf from the feebleness of the performers. I hate every thing that requires attention. Nothing gives pleasure that does not force its own way."

"You only, then, like loud voices, and great powers?"

"O worse and worse!——no, nothing is so disgusting to me. All my amazement is that these people think it worth while to give Concerts at all; one is sick to death of music."

"Nay," cried Cecilia, "if it gives no pleasure, at least it takes none away; for, far from being any impediment to conversation, I think every body talks more during the performance than between the acts. And what is there better you could substitute in its place?"

Cecilia, receiving no answer to this question, again looked round to see if she had been heard; when she observed her new acquaintance, with a very thoughtful air, had turned from her to fix his eyes upon the statue of Britannia.

Very soon after, he hastily arose, and seeming entirely to forget that he had spoken to her, very abruptly walked away.

Mr.

to Mr. Gosport, who was advancing to Cecilia, and had watched part of this scene, stopped him as he was retreating, and said

"Why, Meadows, how's this? are you caught at last?"

"O worn to death! worn to a thread!" cried he, stretching himself and yawning; "I have been talking with a young lady to entertain her! O such heavy work! I would not go through it again for millions!"

"What, have you talked yourself out of breath?"

"No; but the effort! the effort!—O, it has unhinged me for a fortnight!—Entertaining a young lady!—one had better be a galley-slave at once!"

"Well, but, did she not pay your toils? She is surely a sweet creature."

"Nothing can pay one for such insufferable exertion! though she's well enough, too,—better than the common run,—but shy, quite too shy; no drawing her out."

"I thought that was to your taste. You commonly hate much volubility. How have I heard you bemoan yourself when attacked by Miss Larolles!"

"Larolles? O distraction! She talks me into a fever in two minutes. But so it is for ever! nothing but extremes to be met with! common girls are too forward, this lady is too reserved——always some fault! always some drawback! nothing ever perfect!"

"Nay, nay," cried Mr. Gosport, "you do not know her; she is perfect enough in all conscience."

"Better not know her then," answered he, again yawning, "for she cannot be pleasing. Nothing perfect is natural, and hates every thing out of nature."

He then strolled on, and Mr. Gosport approached Cecilia.

"I have been wishing," cried he, "to address you this half hour, but as you were engaged with Mr. Meadows, I did not dare advance."

"O, I see your malice!" cried Cecilia; "you were determined to add weight to the value of your company, by making me fully sensible where the balance would preponderate."

"Nay, if you do not admire Mr. Meadows," cried he, "you must not even whisper it to the winds."

"Is he then so very admirable?"

"O, he is now in the very height of fashionable favour: his dress is a model, his manners are imitated, his attention is courted, and his notice is envied."

"Are you not laughing?"

"No indeed; his privileges are much more extensive than I have mentioned; his decision fixes the exact limits between what is vulgar and what is elegant; his praise or his character is more upon given

gives reputation, and a word from him in public confers faſhion!"

"And by what wonderful powers has he acquired ſuch influence?"

"By nothing but a happy art in catching the reigning foibles of the times, and carrying them to an extreme yet more abſurd than any one had done before him. Ceremony, he found, was already exploded for eaſe, he therefore exploded eaſe for indolence; devotion to the fair ſex, had given way to a more equal and rational intercourſe, which, to puſh ſtill farther, he preſently exchanged for rudeneſs; joviality, too, was already baniſhed for philoſophical indifference; and that, therefore, he diſcarded, for wearineſs and diſguſt."

"And is it poſſible that qualities ſuch as theſe ſhould recommend him to favour and admiration?"

"Very poſſible, for qualities ſuch as theſe conſtitute the preſent ſtate of the times. A man of the *Ton*, who would now be conſpicuous in the gay world, muſt invariably be inſipid, negligent, and ſelfiſh."

"Admirable requiſites!" cried Cecilia, "and Mr. Meadows, I acknowledge, ſeems to have attained them all."

"He muſt never," continued Mr. Gaſtrell, "confeſs the leaſt pleaſure from any thing, a total apathy being the chief ingredient of his character: he muſt, upon no

account, sustain a conversation with any spirit, lest he should appear, to his utter disgrace, interested in what is said: and when he is quite tired of his existence, from a total vacuity of ideas, he must affect a look of absence, and pretend, on the sudden, to be wholly lost in thought."

"I would not wish," said Cecilia, laughing, "a more amiable companion!"

"If he is asked his opinion of any lady," he continued, "he must commonly answer by a grimace; and if he is seated next to one, he must take the utmost pains to shew by his listlessness, yawning, and inattention, that he is sick of his situation; for what he holds of all things to be most gothic, is gallantry to the women. To avoid this is, indeed, the principal solicitude of his life. If he sees a lady in distress for her carriage, he is to enquire of her what is the matter, and then, with a shrug, wish her well through her fatigues, wink at some by-stander, and walk away. If he is in a room where there is a crowd of company, and a scarcity of seats, he must early ensure one of the best in the place, be blind to all looks of fatigue, and deaf to all hints of assistance, and seeming totally to forget himself, lounge at his ease, and appear an unconscious spectator of what is going forward. If he is at a ball where there are more women than men, he *must* decline dancing at all, though it should

happen

happen to be his favourite amuſement, and ſmiling as he paſſes the diſengaged young ladies, wonder to ſee them ſit ſtill, and perhaps aſk them the reaſon!"

"A moſt alluring character indeed!" cried Cecilia; "and pray how long have theſe been the accompliſhments of a fine gentleman?"

"I am but an indifferent chronologer of the modes," he anſwered; "but I know it has been long enough to raiſe juſt expectations that ſome new folly will be ſtarted ſoon, by which the preſent race of INSENSIBLISTS may be driven out. Mr. Meadows is now at the head of this ſect, as Miſs Larolles is of the VOLUBLE, and Miſs Leeſon of the SUPERCILIOUS. But this way comes another, who, though in a different manner, labours with the ſame view, and aſpires at the ſame reward which ſtimulate the ambition of this happy *Triplet*, that of exciting wonder by peculiarity, and envy by wonder."

This deſcription announced Capt. Areſby, who, advancing from the fire-place, told Cecilia how much he rejoiced in ſeeing her, ſaid he had been *reduced to deſpair* by ſo long miſſing that honour, and that he had feared ſhe *made it a principle* to avoid coming in public, having ſought her in vain *partout*.

He then ſmiled, and ſtrolled on to another party.

"And pray of what sect," said Cecilia, "is this gentleman?"

"Of the sect of JARGONISTS," answered Mr. Gosport; "he has not an emotion beyond paying a passing compliment, nor a word to make use of that he has not picked up at public places. Yet this dearth of language, however you may despise it, is not merely owing to a narrow capacity: foppery and conceit have their share in the limitation, for though his phrases are almost always ridiculous or misapplied, they are selected with much study, and introduced with infinite pain."

"Poor man!" cried Cecilia, "is it possible it can cost him any trouble to render himself so completely absurd?"

"Yes; but not more than it costs his neighbours to keep him in countenance. Miss Leeson, since she has presided over the sect of the SUPERCILIOUS, spends at least half her life in wishing the annihilation of the other half; for as she must only speak in her own Coterie, she is compelled to be frequently silent, and therefore, having nothing to think of, she is commonly gnawn with self-denial, and soured with want of amusement: Miss Larolles, indeed, is better off, for in talking faster than she thinks, she has but followed the natural bent of her disposition: as to this poor JARGONIST, he has, I must own, rather a hard task, from the continual restraint

restrain of speaking only out of his own Liliputian vocabulary, and denying himself the relief of ever uttering one word by the call of occasion; but what hardship is that, compared with what is borne by Mr. Meadows? who, since he commenced INSENSIBLIST, has never once dared to be pleased, nor ventured for a moment to look in good humour!"

"Surely, then," said Cecilia, "in a short time, the punishment of this affectation will bring its cure."

"No; for the trick grows into habit, and habit is a second nature. A secret idea of fame makes his forbearance of happiness supportable to him; for he has now the self-satisfaction of considering himself raised to that highest pinnacle of fashionable refinement which is built upon apathy and scorn, and from which, proclaiming himself superior to all possibility of enjoyment, he views the whole world with contempt! holding neither beauty, virtue, wealth, nor power, of importance sufficient to kindle the smallest emotion!"

"O that they could all round listen to you!" cried Cecilia; "they would soon, I think, sicken of their folly, if they heard it thus admirably exposed."

"No; they would but triumph that it had obtained them so much notice!—But pray do you see that gentleman, or don't you

chuſe to know him who has been bowing to you this half hour?"

"Where?" cried Cecilia, and, looking round, perceived Mr. Morrice; who, upon her returning his ſalutation, inſtantly approached her, though he had never ventured to ſhew himſelf at Mr. Harrel's, ſince his unfortunate accident on the evening of the maſquerade.

Entirely caſting aſide the eaſy familiarity at which he had latterly arrived, he enquired after her health with the moſt fearful diffidence, and then, bowing profoundly, was modeſtly retiring; when Mrs. Harrel, perceiving him, ſmiled with ſo much good-humour, that he gathered courage to return and addreſs her, and found her, to his infinite delight, as obliging and civil as ever.

The concert was now over; the ladies aroſe, and the gentlemen joined them. Morrice, at the ſight of Mr. Harrel, was again ſhrinking; but Mr. Harrel, immediately ſhaking hands with him, enquired what had kept him ſo long from Portman-Square? Morrice then, finding to his great ſurpriſe, that no one had thought more of the miſchief but himſelf who had committed it, joyouſly diſcarded his timidity, and became as ſprightly as before his mortification.

A motion was now made for going to the tea room; and as they walked on, Cecilia, in looking up to examine the building, ſaw

in

in one of the galleries young Delville, and almoſt at the ſame time caught his eye.

Scarcely now did a moment elapſe before he joined her. The ſight of him, ſtrongly reviving in her mind the painful contrarieſy of opinion with which ſhe had lately thought of him, the ſentiments ſo much in his favour which but a few days before ſhe had encouraged, and which it was only that morning ſhe had endeavoured to cruſh, made her meet him with a kind of melancholy that almoſt induced her to lament he was amiable, and repine that ſhe knew none like him.

His appearance, mean time, was far different; he ſeemed enchanted at the ſight of her, he flew eagerly to meet her, and his eyes ſparkled with pleaſure as he approached her; a pleaſure neither moderate nor diſguiſed, but lively, unreſtrained, and expreſſive.

Cecilia, whoſe plans ſince ſhe had laſt ſeen him had twice varied, who firſt had looked forward to being united with him for ever, and afterwards had determined to avoid with him even a common acquaintance, could not, while theſe thoughts were all recurring to her memory, receive much delight from obſerving his gaiety, or feel at all gratified by his unembarraſſed manners. The openneſs of his attentions, and the frankneſs of his admiration, which hitherto had charmed her as marks of the ſincerity of his character, now

ſhocked her as proofs of the indifference of his heart, which feeling for her a mere common regard, that affected neither his ſpirits nor his peace, he manifeſted without ſcruple, ſince it was not accompanied with even a wiſh beyond the preſent hour.

She now, too, recollected that ſuch had always been his conduct, one ſingle and ſingular moment excepted, when, as he gave to her his letter for Mr. Belfield, he ſeemed ſtruck, as ſhe was herſelf, by the extraordinary coincidence of their ideas and proceedings: that emotion, however, ſhe now regarded as caſual and tranſitory, and ſeeing him ſo much happier than herſelf, ſhe felt aſhamed of her deluſion, and angry at her eaſy captivation.

Reflections ſuch as theſe, though they added freſh motives to her reſolution of giving up all thoughts of his alliance, were yet ſo humiliating, that they robbed her of all power of receiving pleaſure from what was paſſing, and made her forget that the place ſhe was in was even intended for a place of entertainment.

Young Delvile, after painting in lively colours the loſs his houſe had ſuſtained by her quitting it, and dwelling with equal force upon the regret of his mother and his own, aſked in a low voice if ſhe would do him ſo much honour as to introduce him to Mr. Harrel. "As the ſon," added he, "of a brother

brother guardian. I think I have a kind of claim to his acquaintance."

Cecilia could not refuse, though as the request was likely to occasion more frequent meetings, she perſuaded herſelf ſhe was unwilling to comply. The ceremony therefore paſt, and was again repeated with Mrs. Harrel, who, though ſhe had ſeveral times ſeen him, had never been formally made known to him.

The Harrels were both of them much pleaſed at this mark of civility in a young man whoſe family had prepared them rather to expect his ſcorn, and expreſſed their wiſhes that he would drink his tea in their party. He accepted their invitation with alacrity, and turning to Cecilia, ſaid, "Have I not ſkilfully timed my introduction? But, though you have done me this honour with Mr. and Mrs. Harrel, I muſt not yet, I preſume, entreat you to extend it to a certain happy gentleman of this company," glancing his eyes towards Sir Robert Floyer.

"No, Sir," anſwered ſhe with quickneſs, "yet, nor ever!"

They were now at the door leading down ſtairs to the tea-room. Cecilia ſaw that Sir Robert, who had hitherto been engaged with ſome gentlemen, ſeemed to be ſeeking her; and the remembrance of the quarrel which had followed her refuſal of his aſſiſtance at the Opera-houſe, obliged her to determine,

ſhould

ſhould he offer it again, to accept it from the ſame brutality which forced this intention, contributed to render it repugnant to her, and ſhe reſolved if poſſible to avoid him, by hurrying down ſtairs before he could reach her. She made, therefore, a ſudden attempt to ſlip through the crowd, and as ſhe was light and active, ſhe eaſily ſucceeded; but though her haſty motion ſeparated her from the reſt of her party, Delvile, who was earneſtly looking at her, to diſcover her meaning in the diſclaiming ſpeech ſhe made about Sir Robert, ſaw into her deſign, but ſuffered her not to go alone; he contrived in a moment to follow and join her, while ſhe was ſtopping at the foot of the ſtairs for Mrs. Harrel.

"Why what a little thief you are," cried he, "to run away from us thus! what do you think Sir Robert will ſay? I ſaw him looking for you at the very inſtant of your flight."

"Then you ſaw at the ſame time," ſaid Cecilia, "the reaſon of it."

"Will you give me leave," cried he laughing, "to repeat this to my Lord Ernolf?"

"You may repeat it, Sir, if you pleaſe," ſaid Cecilia, piqued that he had not rather thought of himſelf than of Lord Ernolf, "to the whole Pantheon."

"And if I ſhould," cried he, "half of it, *at leaſt*, would thank me; and to obtain the

applauſe

applause at so noble an assembly, what would it signify that Sir Robert should cut my throat?"

"I believe," said Cecilia, deeply mortified by a raillery that showed so little interest in her avowal of indifference, "you are determined to make me as sick of that man's name, as I am of his conversation."

"And is it possible," exclaimed Delvile, in a tone of surprise, "that such can be your opinion, and yet, situated as you are, the whole world at your command, and all mankind at your devotion——but I am answering you seriously, when you are only speaking by rule."

"What rule, Sir?"

"That which young ladies, upon certain occasions, always prescribe themselves."

Here they were interrupted by the arrival of the rest of the company; though not before Cecilia had received some little consolation for her displeasure, by finding that young Delvile still supposed she was engaged, and flattering herself his language would be different were he informed of the contrary.

Morrice now undertook to procure them a table for tea, which, as the room was very full, was not easily done; and while they were waiting his success, Miss Larolles, who from the stairs had perceived Cecilia, came running up to her, and taking her hand, called out, "Lord, my dear creature, who'd

have

have thought of seeing you here? I was never so surprised in my life! I really thought you was gone into a convent, it's so extreme long since I've seen you. But of all things in the world, why was you not at Lady Nyland's last assembly? I thought of asking Mrs. Harrel fifty times why you did not come, but it always went out of my head. You've no notion how excessively I was disappointed."

"You are very obliging," said Cecilia, laughing, "but I hope since you so often forgot it, the disappointment did not much lessen your entertainment."

"O Lord no! I was never so happy in my life. There was such a crowd, no body could get a-bed. Every body in the world was there. You've no idea how delightful it was. I thought verily I should have fainted with the heat."

"That was delightful indeed! And how long did you stay?"

"Why we danced till three in the morning. We began with Cotillons, and finished with country dances. It was the most glorious thing you ever saw in your life, every thing quite in style. I was so monstrously fatigued, I could hardly get through the last dance. I really thought I should have dropt down dead. Only conceive, dancing five hours in such a monstrous crowd! I assure you when I got home my feet were all blisters. You have no idea how they smarted."

"And

"And whence come you, cried young Delville, that you partake so little of these delights?

"Because I fear," answered Cecilia, I came too late into the school of fashion to brow a docile pupil."

"Do you know," continued Miss Larolles, "Mr. Meadows has not spoke one word to me all the evening though I am sure he saw me, for I sat at the outside on purpose to speak to a person or two, that I knew would be strolling about; for if one sits on the inside, there's no speaking to a creature you know; so I never do it at the Opera, nor in the boxes at Ranelagh, nor any where. It's the shockingest thing you can conceive to be made sit in the middle of those forms; one might as well be at home, for nobody can speak to one."

"But you don't seem to have had much better success," said Cecilia, "in keeping at the outside."

"Oyes I have, for I got a little chat with two or three people as they were passing, for, you know, when one sits there they can't help saying something; though I assure you all the mornings so excessively cold they don't care whether they speak to one or no. As to Mr. Meadows, he's really enough to provoke one to death. I suppose he's in one of his absent fits. However, I assure you, I think it's extreme impertinent of him, and I

for I shall tell Mr. Sowter, for I know he'll make a point of telling him of it again."

"I rather think," said Cecilia, "the best would be to return the compliment in kind, and when he next recollects you appear to have forgotten him."

"O Lord, that's a very good notion, so I will, I declare. But you can't conceive how glad I am the Concert's over, for I assure you, though I sat as near the fire as possible, I was so extreme cold you've no idea, for Mr. Meadows never would let me have the least peep at it. I declare I believe he does it on purpose to plague one, for he grows more and more ugly than ever. You can't think how I hate him!"

"Not easily, I believe indeed," said Cecilia, archly.

"O do but look," resumed the fair VOLUBILIS, "if there is not Mrs. Mears in her old red gown again! I begin to think she'll never have another. I wish she was to have an execution in her house, if it was only to get rid of it. I am so fatigued with the sight of it you can't conceive."

Mr. Morrice now brought intelligence that he had secured one side of a table, which would very well accommodate the ladies; and that the other side was only occupied by one gentleman, who, as he was not drinking tea himself, would doubtless give up his place when the party appeared.

Miss

Miss Larolles then ran back to her own set, and the rest followed: Mr. Morrice, Mrs. Harrel, Mrs. Mears, and Cecilia took their places. The gentleman opposite to them proved to be Mr. Meadows: Morrice, therefore, was much deceived in his expectations, for far from giving up his place, he had flung himself all along upon the form in such a lounging posture, while he rested one arm upon the table, that, not contented with merely keeping his own seat, he filled up a space meant for three.

Mr. Harrel had already walked off to another party: Delville stood aloof for some minutes, expecting Sir Robert Floyer would station himself behind Cecilia; but Sir Robert, who would scarce have thought such a condescension due to a princess, disdained any appearance of assiduity, even while he made it his care to publish his pretensions; and therefore, finding no accommodation to please him, he stalked towards some gentlemen in another part of the room. Delville then took the post he had neglected, and Mr. Arnott, who had not had courage to make any effort in his own favour, modestly stood near him. Cecilia contrived to make room for Mr. Gosport next to herself, and Morrice was sufficiently happy in being allowed to call the waiters, superintend the provisions, and serve the whole party.

The task of making tea fell upon Cecilia, who

who being somewhat incommoded by the vicinity of her neighbours, Mrs. Mears called out to Mr. Meadows, "Do pray, Sir, be so good as to make room for one of us at your side."

Mr. Meadows, who was indolently picking his teeth, and examining them with a tooth-pick case glass, did not, at first, seem to hear her; and when she repeated her request, he only looked at her, and said, "umph?"

"Now really, Mr. Meadows," said she, "when you see any ladies in such distress, I wonder how you can forbear helping them."

"In distress, are you?" cried he, with a vacant smile, "pray what's the matter?"

"Don't you see? we are so crowded we can hardly sit."

"Can't you?" cried he, "upon my honour it's very shameful that these people don't contrive some seats more convenient."

"Yes," said Mrs. Mears; "but if you would be so kind as to let somebody else sit by you we should not want any contrivance."

Here Mr. Meadows was seized with a furious fit of yawning, which as much diverted Cecilia and Mr. Gosport, as it offended Mrs. Mears, who with great displeasure added, "Indeed, Mr. Meadows, it's very strange that you never hear what's said to you."

"I beg your pardon," said he, "were you

you ſpeaking to me?" and again began picking his teeth.

Morrice, eager to contraſt his civility with the inattention of Mr. Meadows, now flew round to the other ſide of the table, and calling out, "let *me* help you, Miſs Beverley, I can make tea better than any body," he leant over that part of the form which Mr. Meadows had occupied with one of his feet, in order to pour it out himſelf: but Mr. Meadows, by an unfortunate removal of his foot, bringing him forwarder than he was prepared to go, the tea-pot and its contents were overturned immediately oppoſite to Cecilia.

Young Delvile, who ſaw the impending evil, from an impetuous impulſe to prevent her ſuffering by it, haſtily drew her back, and bending down before her, received the miſchief to which ſhe was threatened.

Mrs. Mears and Mrs. Harrel vacated their ſeats in a moment, and Mr. Goſport and Mr. Arnott aſſiſted in clearing the table, and removing Cecilia, who was very ſlightly hurt, and at once ſurpriſed, aſhamed, and pleaſed at the manner in which ſhe had been ſaved.

Young Delvile, though a ſufferer from his gallantry, the hot water having penetrated through his coat to his arm and ſhoulder, was at firſt inſenſible to his ſituation, from an apprehenſion that Cecilia had not

wholly

wholly escaped; and his enquiries were so eager and so anxious, made with a look of such solicitude, and a voice of such alarm, that, equally astonished and gratified, she secretly blest the accident which had given birth to his uneasiness, however she grieved for its consequence to himself.

But no sooner was he satisfied of her safety, than he felt himself obliged to retire; yet attributing to inconvenience what was really the effect of pain, he hurried away with an appearance of sport, saying, "There is something, I must own, rather *unknightly* in quitting the field for a wet jacket, but the company, I hope, will only give me credit for flying away to Ranelagh. So

"Like a brave general after being beat,
I'll exult and rejoice in a prudent retreat."*

He then hastened to his carriage: and poor Morrice, frightened and confounded at the disaster he had occasioned, sneaked after him with much less ceremony. While Mr. Meadows, wholly unconcerned by the distress and confusion around him, sat quietly picking his teeth, and looking on during the whole transaction, with an unmeaning stare, that made it doubtful whether he had even perceived it.

* Smart.

Order

Order being now reſtored, the ladies finiſhed their tea, and went up ſtairs. Cecilia, to whom the late accident had afforded much new and intereſting matter for reflection, wiſhed immediately to have returned home, but ſhe was not the leader of the party, and therefore could not make the propoſal.

They then ſtrolled through all the apartments, and having walked about till the faſhionable time of retiring, they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, and proceeded to the little room near the entrance to the great one, in order to wait for their carriages.

Here Cecilia again met Miſs Larolles, who came to make various remarks, and infinite ridicule, upon ſundry unfaſhionable or uncoſtly articles in the dreſſes of the ſurrounding company; as well as to complain, with no little reſentment, that Mr. Meadows was again ſtanding before the fire!

Captain Areſby alſo advanced to tell her he was quite *abattu* by having ſo long loſt ſight of her, to hope ſhe *would make a renounce* of mortifying the world by diſcarding it, and to proteſt he had waited for his carriage till he was actually upon the point of being *accable*.

In the midſt of this *jargon*, to which the fulneſs of Cecilia's mind hardly permitted her to liſten, there ſuddenly appeared at the door of the apartment, Mr. Albany, who, with

with his uſual aſſurance of countenance, kept to look round upon the company.

"Do you ſee," cried Mr. Goſport to Cecilia, "who approaches? your poor *ſycophants* will again be taken to taſk, and I, for one, tremble at the coming ſtorm!"

"O Lord," cried Miſs Larolles, "I wiſh I was ſafe in my chair! that man always frightens me out of my ſenſes. You've no notion what diſagreeable things he ſays to one. I aſſure you I've no doubt but he's crazy: and I am always in the ſhockingeſt fright in the world for fear he ſhould be taken with a fit while I'm near him."

"It is really a petrifying thing," ſaid the Captain, "that one can go to no *ſpectacle* without the *horreur* of being *obſedé* by that perſon! if he comes this way, I ſhall certainly make a renounce, and retire."

"Why ſo?" ſaid Sir Robert, "what the d—l do you mind him for?"

"O he is the greateſt bore in nature!" cried the Captain, "and I always do *mon poſſible* to avoid him; for he breaks out into ſuch barbarous phraſes, that I find myſelf *degouté* with him in a moment."

"O, I aſſure you," ſaid Miſs Larolles, "he attacks one ſometimes in a manner you've no idea. One day he came up to me all of a ſudden, and aſked me what good I thought I did by dreſſing ſo much? Only conceive how ſhocking!"

"O,

"O, I have had the *horreur* of queſtions of that ſort from him *ſans fin*," ſaid the Captain. "Once he took the liberty to aſk me, what ſervice I was of to the world? and another time, he deſired me to inform him whether I had ever made any poor perſon pray for me? And, in ſhort, he has ſo frequently inconvenienced me by his impertinencies, that he really bores me to a degree."

"That's juſt the thing that makes him hunt you down," ſaid Sir Robert; "if he were to aſk me queſtions for a month together, I ſhould never trouble myſelf to move a muſcle."

"The matter of his diſcourſe," ſaid Mr. Goſport, "is not more ſingular than the manner; for without any ſeeming effort or conſciouſneſs, he runs into blank verſe perpetually. I have made much enquiry about him, but all I am able to learn, is, that he was certainly confined, at one part of his life, in a private mad-houſe: and though now, from not being miſchievous, he is ſet at liberty, his looks, language, and whole behaviour, announce the former injury of his intellects."

"O Lord," cried Miſs Larolles, half ſcreaming, "what ſhocking notions you put in one's head! I declare I dare ſay I ſha'n't get ſafe home for him, for I aſſure you I believe he has taken a ſpite to me! and all becauſe one day, before I knew of his odd

ways, I happened to fall a laughing at his going about in that old coat. Do you know it put him quite in a paſſion! only conceive how ill-natured!"

"O he has diſtreſſed me," exclaimed the Captain, with a ſhrug, "*partout!* and found ſo much fault with every thing I have done, that I ſhould really be glad to have the honour to cut; for the moment he comes up to me, I know what I have to expect!"

"But I muſt tell you," cried Miſs Larolles, "how monſtrouſly he put me in a fright one evening when I was talking with Miſs Moffat. Do you know, he came up to us, and aſked what we were ſaying! and becauſe we could not think in a minute of ſomething to anſwer him, he ſaid he ſuppoſed we were only talking ſome ſcandal, and ſo we had better go home, and employ ourſelves in working for the poor! only think how horrid! and after that, he was ſo exceſſive impertinent in his remarks, there was quite no bearing him. I aſſure you he cut me up ſo you've no notion."

Here Mr. Albany advanced; and every body but Sir Robert moved out of the way.

Fixing his eyes upon Cecilia, with an expreſſion *more in ſorrow than in anger*, after contemplating her ſome time in ſilence, he exclaimed, "Ah lovely, but periſhable flower! how long will that ingenuous countenance, wearing, becauſe wanting no diſ-

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guiſe, look reſponſive of the whiteneſs of the region within? How long will that air of innocence irradiate your whole appearance? unſpoilt by proſperity, unperverted by power! pure in the midſt of ſurrounding depravity! unſullied in the tainted air of infectious perdition!"

The confuſion of Cecilia at this public addreſs, which drew upon her the eyes and attention of all the company, was inexpreſſible; ſhe aroſe from her ſeat, covered with bluſhes, and ſaying, "I fancy the carriage muſt be ready," preſſed forward to quit the room, followed by Sir Robert, who anſwered, "No, no, they'll call it when it comes up. Arnott, will you go and ſee where it is?"

Cecilia ſtopt, but whiſpered Mrs. Harrel to ſtand near her.

"And whither," cried Albany, indignantly, "whither wouldſt thou go? Art thou already diſdainful of my precepts? and canſt thou not one ſhort moment ſpare from the tumultuous folly which encircles thee? Many and many are the hours thou mayſt ſpend with ſuch as theſe; the world, alas! is full of them; weary not then, ſo ſoon, of an old man that would admoniſh thee,—he cannot call upon thee long, for ſoon he will be called upon himſelf."

This ſolemn exhortation extremely diſtreſſed her; and fearing to ſtill farther of-

ſend him by making another effort to eſcape, ſhe anſwered in a low voice, "I will not only hear, but thank you for your precepts, if you will forbear to give them before ſo many witneſſes."

"Whence," cried he ſternly, "theſe vain and ſuperficial diſtinctions? Do you not dance in public? What renders you more conſpicuous? Do you not dreſs to be admired, and walk to be obſerved? Why then this fantaſtical ſcruple, unjuſtified by reaſon, unſupported by analogy? Is folly only to be publiſhed? Is vanity alone to be exhibited? Oh ſlaves of ſenſeleſs contraction! Oh feeble followers of yet feebler prejudice! daring to be wicked, yet fearing to be wiſe; dauntleſs in levity, yet ſhrinking from the name of virtue!"

The latter part of this ſpeech, during which he turned with energy to the whole company, raiſed ſuch a general alarm, that all the ladies haſtily quitted the room, and all the gentlemen endeavoured to enter it, equally curious to ſee the man who made the oration, and the lady to whom it was addreſſed. Cecilia, therefore, found her ſituation inſupportable; "I muſt go," ſhe cried, "whether there is a carriage or not! Pray, Mrs. Harrel, let us go!"

Sir Robert then offered to take her hand, which ſhe was extremely ready to give him; but while the crowd made their paſſage difficult,

cult, Albany, following and ſtopping her, ſaid, "What is it you fear? a miſerable old man, worn out by the ſorrows of that experience from which he offers you counſel? What, too, is it you truſt? a libertine wretch, coveting nothing but your wealth, for the gift of which he will repay you by the perverſion of your principles!"

"What the d—l do you mean by that?" cried the Baronet.

"To ſhew," anſwered he, auſterely, "the inconſiſtency of falſe delicacy; to ſhew how thoſe who are too timid for truth, can fearleſs meet licentiouſneſs."

"For Heaven's ſake, Sir," cried Cecilia, "ſay no more to me now! Call upon me in Portman-Square when you pleaſe,—reprove me in whatever you think me blameable, I ſhall be grateful for your inſtructions, and bettered, perhaps, by your care;—but leſſons and notice thus public can do me nothing but injury."

"How happy," cried he, "were no other injury near thee! ſpotleſs were then the hour of thy danger; bright, fair, and refulgent thy paſſage to ſecurity! the Good would receive thee with praiſe, the Guilty would ſupplicate thy prayers, the Poor would follow thee with bleſſings, and Children would be taught by thy example!"

He then quitted her, every body making way as he moved, and proceeded into the

great room. Mrs. Harrel's carriage being alſo announced at the ſame time, Cecilia loſt not an inſtant in haſtening away.

Sir Robert, as he conducted her, diſdainfully laughed at the adventure, which the general licence allowed to Mr. Albany prevented his reſenting, and which therefore he ſcorned to appear moved at.

Mrs. Harrel could talk of nothing elſe, neither was Cecilia diſpoſed to change the ſubject, for the remains of infanity which ſeemed to hang upon him were affecting without being alarming, and her deſire to know more of him grew every inſtant ſtronger.

This deſire, however, outlived not the converſation to which it gave riſe; when ſhe returned to her own room, no veſtige of it remained upon her mind, which a nearer concern and deeper intereſt wholly occupied.

The behaviour of young Delvile had pained, pleaſed, and diſturbed her. His activity to ſave her from miſchief might proceed merely from gallantry or good nature; upon that, therefore, ſhe dwelt little: but his eagerneſs, his anxiety, his inſenſibility to himſelf, were more than good breeding could claim, and ſeemed to ſpring from a motive leſs artificial.

She now, therefore, believed that her partiality was returned; and this belief had *power to* ſhake all her reſolves, and enfeeble

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all her objections. The arrogance of Mr. Delvile leſſened in her reflections, the admonitions of Mr. Monckton abated in their influence. With the firſt ſhe conſidered that though connected ſhe need not live; and for the ſecond, though ſhe acknowledged the excellence of his judgment, ſhe concluded him wholly ignorant of her ſentiments of Delvile; which ſhe imagined, when once revealed, would make every obſtacle to the alliance ſeem trifling, when put in competition with mutual eſteem and affection.

CHAP. III.

A REPROOF.

THE attention of Cecilia to her own affairs, did not make her forgetful of thoſe of the Harrels: and the morning after the buſy day which was laſt recorded, as ſoon as ſhe quitted the breakfaſt-room, ſhe began a note to Mr. Monckton, but was interrupted with information that he was already in the houſe.

She went to him immediately, and had the ſatisfaction of finding him alone; but de-

ſirous as ſhe was to relate to him the tranſactions of the preceding day, there was in his countenance a gravity ſo unuſual, that her impatience was involuntarily checked, and ſhe waited firſt to hear if he had himſelf any thing to communicate.

He kept her not long in ſuſpence. "Miſs Beverley," he ſaid, "I bring you intelligence, which though I know you will be very ſorry to hear, it is abſolutely neceſſary ſhould be told you immediately: you may otherwiſe, from however laudable motives, be drawn into ſome action which you may repent for life."

"What now!" cried Cecilia, much alarmed.

"All that I ſuſpected," ſaid he, "and more than I hinted to you, is true; Mr. Harrel is a ruined man! he is not worth a groat, and he is in debt beyond what he ever poſſeſſed."

Cecilia made no anſwer: ſhe knew but too fatally the deſperate ſtate of his affairs, yet that *his debts were more than he had ever poſſeſſed*, ſhe had not thought poſſible.

"My enquiries," continued he, "have been among principals, and ſuch as would not dare deceive me. I haſtened, therefore, to you, that this timely notice might enforce the injunctions I gave you when I had the pleaſure of ſeeing you laſt, and prevent a misjudging generoſity from leading you into

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any injury of your own fortune, for a man who is paſt all relief from it, and who cannot be ſaved, even though you were to be deſtroyed for his ſake."

"You are very good," ſaid Cecilia, "but your counſel is now too late!" She then briefly acquainted him with what paſſed, and with how large a ſum ſhe had parted.

He heard her with rage, amazement, and horror; and after inveighing againſt Mr. Hunter in the bittereſt terms, he ſaid, "But why, before you ſigned your name to ſo baſe an impoſition, could you not ſend for me?"

"I wiſhed, I meant to have done it," cried ſhe, "but I thought the time paſt when you could help me. How, indeed, could you have ſaved me? my word was given, given with an oath the moſt ſolemn, and the firſt I have ever taken in my life."

"An oath ſo forced," anſwered he, "the moſt delicate conſcience would have abſolved you from performing. You have, indeed, been groſsly impoſed upon; and pardon me if I add, unaccountably to blame. Was it not obvious that relief ſo circumſtanced muſt be temporary? If his ruin had been any thing leſs than certain, what tradeſman would have been ſo inſolent? You have therefore deprived yourſelf of the power of doing good to a worthier object, merely to grant a longer date to extravagance and villainy."

"Yet how," cried Cecilia, deeply touched by this reproof, "how could I do otherwise? Could I see a man in the agonies of deſpair, hear him firſt darkly hint his own deſtruction, and afterwards behold him almoſt in the very act of ſuicide, the inſtrument of ſelf-murder in his deſperate hand—and yet, though he put his life in my power, though he told me I could preſerve him, and told me he had no other reliance or reſource, could I leave him to his dreadful deſpondence, refuſe my aſſiſting hand to raiſe him from perdition, and, to ſave what, after all, I am well able to ſpare, ſuffer a fellow-creature, who flung himſelf upon my mercy, to offer up his laſt accounts with an action blacker than any which had preceded it?—No, I cannot repent what I have done, though I lament, indeed, that the object was not more deſerving."

"Your repreſentation," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "like every thing elſe that I ever heard you utter, breathes nothing but benevolence and goodneſs: but your pity has been abuſed, and your underſtanding impoſed upon. Mr. Harrel had no intention to deſtroy himſelf; the whole was an infamous trick, which, had not your generoſity been too well known, would never have been played."

"I cannot think quite ſo ill of him," ſaid Cecilia, "nor for the world would I have

have inflicted my own future reproaches by trusting to such a suspicion, which, had it proved wrong, and had Mr. Harrel, upon my refusal, committed the fatal deed, would have made his murder upon my own conscience rest for ever! Surely the experiment would have been too hazardous, when the consequence had all my future peace in its power."

"It is impossible not to revere your scruples," said Mr. Monckton, "even while I consider them as causeless; for causeless they undoubtedly were: the man who could act so atrocious a part, who could so scandalously pillage a young lady who was his guest and his ward, take advantage of her temper for the plunder of her fortune, and extort her compliance by the basest and most dishonourable arts, meant only to terrify her into a compliance; for he can be nothing less than a downright and thorough scoundrel, capable of every species of mean villainy."

He then protested he would at least acquaint her other guardians with what had passed, whose business it would be to enquire if there was any chance of redress.

Cecilia, however, had not much trouble in combating this proposal; for though her objections, which were merely those of punctilious honour and delicacy, weighed nothing with a man who regarded them as absurdities, yet his own apprehensions of appearing

therefore, to recommend to her a residence with Mr. Briggs, well knowing that his house would be a security against her seeing any man equal to himself, and hoping that under his roof he might again be as unrivalled in her opinion and esteem, as he formerly was in the country.

But here the opposition of Cecilia was too earnest for any hope that it might be surmounted; for, added to her dislike of Mr. Briggs, her repugnance to such an habitation was strongly, though silently encreased, by her secret inclination to return to St. James's-Square.

"I mention not Mr. Briggs as an eligible host," said Mr. Monckton, after listening to her objections, "but merely as one more proper for you than Mr. Delvile, with whom your fixing at present would be but ill thought of in the world."

"Ill thought of, Sir! Why so?"

"Because he has a son; for whose sake alone it would be universally concluded you changed your abode: and to give any pretence for such a report, would by no means accord with the usual delicacy of your conduct."

Cecilia was confounded with this speech; the truth of the charge she felt, and the probability of the censure she did not dare dispute.

He then gave her a thousand exhortations to

to beware of the ſchemes and artifices of Mr. Harrel, which he foreſaw would be innumerable. He told her, too, that with reſpect to Sir Robert Floyer, he thought ſhe had better ſuffer the report to ſubſide of itſelf, which in time it muſt neceſſarily do, than give to it ſo much conſequence as to ſend a meſſage to the Baronet, from which he might pretend to infer that hitherto ſhe had been wavering, or ſhe would have ſent to him ſooner.

But the real motive of this advice was, that as he found Sir Robert by no means to be dreaded, he hoped the report, if generally circulated and credited, might keep off other pretenders, and intimidate or deceive young Delvile.

The purport for which Cecilia had wiſhed this conference was, however, wholly unanſwered. Mr. Monckton, enraged by the conduct of Mr. Harrel, refuſed to talk of his affairs, and could only mention him with deteſtation: but Cecilia, leſs ſevere in her judgment, and more tender in her heart, would not yet give up the hope of an amendment ſhe ſo anxiouſly wiſhed; and having now no other perſon to whom ſhe could apply, determined to conſult with Mr. Arnott, whoſe affection for his ſiſter would give him a zeal in the affair that might ſomewhat ſupply the place of ſuperior abilities.

There was, indeed, no time to be loſt in making

making the projected attempt; for no sooner was the immediate danger of suffering removed, than the alarm wore away, and the penitence was forgotten; every thing went on as usual, no new regulations were made, no expences abated, no pleasures forborne, not a thought of hereafter admitted: and ruinous and terrible as had been the preceding storm, no trace of it was visible in the serenity of the present calm.

An occasion of discussion with Mrs. Arnott very speedily offered. Mr. Harrel said he had observed in the looks of his friends at the Pantheon much surprise at the sight of him, and declared he should take yet another measure for removing all suspicion. This was to give a splendid entertainment at his own house to all his acquaintance, to which he meant to invite every body of any consequence he had ever seen, and almost every body he had ever heard of in his life.

Levity so unfeeling, and a spirit of extravagance so irreclaimable, were hopeless prognostics, yet Cecilia would not desist from her design. She therefore took the earliest opportunity of speaking with Mrs. Arnott upon the subject, when she openly expressed her uneasiness at the state of her brother's affairs, and warmly acknowledged her displeasure at his dissipated way of life.

Mr. Arnott soon shewed that example was all he wanted to declare the same sentiments.

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He owned he had long disapproved the conduct of Mr. Harrel, and trembled at the situation of his sister. They then considered what it was possible to propose that might relieve their affairs, and concluded, that entirely to quit London for some years, was the only chance that remained of saving them from absolute destruction.

Mr. Arnott, therefore, though fearfully, and averse to the task, told his sister their mutual advice. She thanked him, said she was much obliged to him, and would certainly consider his proposal, and mention it to Mr. Harrel.—Parties of pleasure, however, intervened, and the promise was neglected.

Cecilia then again spoke herself. Mrs. Harrel, much softened by her late acts of kindness, was no longer offended by her interference, but contented herself with confessing that she quite hated the country, and could only bear to live in it in summer time. And when Cecilia very earnestly expostulated on the weakness of such an objection to a step absolutely necessary for her future safety and happiness, she said, *she could do no worse than that if already ruined*, and therefore that she thought *it would be very hard to expect from her such a sacrifice beforehand.*

It was in vain Cecilia remonstrated: Mrs. Harrel's love of pleasure was stronger than her understanding; and therefore, though she

listened

liſtened to her with patience, ſhe concluded with the ſame anſwer ſhe had begun.

Cecilia, then, though almoſt heartleſs, reſolved upon talking with Mr. Harrel himſelf; and therefore, taking an opportunity which he had not time to elude, ſhe ingenuouſly told him her opinion of his danger, and of the manner in which it might be avoided.

He paid unuſual attention to her advice, but ſaid ſhe was much miſtaken with reſpect to his affairs, which he believed he ſhould now very ſpeedily retrieve, as he had had the preceding night an uncommon *run of luck*, and flattered himſelf with being able very ſhortly to pay all his debts, and begin the world again upon a new ſcore.

This open confeſſion of gaming was but a new ſhock to Cecilia, who ſcrupled not to repreſent to him the uncertainty of ſo hazardous a reliance, and the inevitable evils of ſo deſtructive a practice.

She made not, however, the leaſt impreſſion upon his mind; he aſſured her he doubted not giving her ſhortly a good account of himſelf, and that living in the country was a reſource of deſperation which need not be anticipated.

Cecilia, though grieved and provoked by their mutual folly and blindneſs, could proceed no further; advice and admonition ſhe ſpared not, but authority ſhe had none to uſe. She regretted her ineffectual attempt to

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Mr. Arnott, who was yet more cruelly afflicted at it; but though they converſed upon the ſubject by every opportunity, they were equally unable to relate any ſucceſs from their efforts, or to deviſe any plan more likely to enſure it.

CHAP. IV.

A MISTAKE.

MEAN time young Delvile failed not to honour Cecilia's introduction of him to Mr. Harrel, by waiting upon that gentleman as ſoon as the ill effects of his accident at the Pantheon permitted him to leave his own houſe. Mr. Harrel, though juſt going out when he called, was deſirous of being upon good terms with his family, and therefore took him up ſtairs to preſent him to his lady, and invited him to tea and cards the next evening.

Cecilia, who was with Mrs. Harrel, did not ſee him without emotion; which was not much leſſened by the taſk of thanking him for his aſſiſtance at the Pantheon, and enquiring how he had himſelf fared. No ſign, however, of emotion appeared in re-

turn,

turn, either when he firſt addreſſed, or afterwards anſwered her: the look of ſolicitude with which he had been ſo much ſtruck when they laſt parted was no longer diſcernable, and the voice of ſenſibility which had removed all her doubts, was no longer to be heard. His general eaſe and natural gaiety were again unruffled; and though he had never ſeemed really indifferent to her, there was not the leaſt appearance of any added partiality.

Cecilia felt an involuntary mortification as ſhe obſerved this change: yet, upon reflection, ſhe ſtill attributed his whole behaviour to his miſtake with reſpect to her ſituation, and therefore was but the more gratified by the preference he occaſionally betrayed.

The invitation for the next evening was accepted; and Cecilia, for once, felt no repugnance to joining the company. Young Delvile again was in excellent ſpirits; but though his chief pleaſure was evidently derived from converſing with her, ſhe had the vexation to obſerve that he ſeemed to think her the undoubted property of the Baronet, always retreating when he approached, and as careful, when next her, to yield his place if he advanced, as, when he was diſtant, to guard it from all others.

But when Sir Robert was employed at cards, all ſcruples ceaſing, he neglected not to engroſs her almoſt wholly. He was eager

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to ſpeak to her of the affairs of Mr. Belfield, which he told her were now a better aſpect. The letter, indeed, of recommendation which he had ſhewn to her, had failed, as the nobleman to whom it was written had already entered into an engagement for his ſon; but he had made application elſewhere, which he believed would be ſucceſsful; and he had communicated his proceedings to Mr. Belfield, whoſe ſpirits he hoped would recover by this proſpect of employment and advantage. "It is, however, but too true," he added, "that I have rather obtained his conſent to the ſteps I am taking, than his approbation of them; nor do I believe, had I previouſly conſulted him, I ſhould have had even that. Diſappointed in his higher views, his ſpirit is broken, and he is heartleſs and hopeleſs, ſcarce condeſcending to accept relief, from the bitter remembrance that he expected preferment. Time, however, will blunt this acute ſenſibility, and reflection will make him bluſh at this unreaſonable delicacy. But we muſt patiently ſoothe him till he is more himſelf; or while we mean to ſerve, we ſhall only torment him. Sickneſs, ſorrow, and poverty have all fallen heavily upon him, and they have all fallen at once; we muſt not, therefore, wonder, to find him intractable, when his mind is as much depreſſed, as his body is enervated."

Cecilia, to whom his candour and generoſity

roſity always gave freſh delight, ſtrengthened his opinions by her concurrence, and confirmed his deſigns by the intereſt which ſhe took in them.

From this time he found almoſt daily ſome occaſion for calling in Portman-ſquare. The application of Cecilia in favour of Mr. Belfield, gave him a right to communicate to her all his proceedings concerning him; and he had ſome letters to ſhew, ſome new ſcheme to propoſe, ſome refuſal to lament, or ſome hope to rejoice over, almoſt perpetually: or even when theſe failed, Cecilia had a cold, which he came to enquire after, or Mrs. Harrel gave him an invitation, which rendered any excuſe unneceſſary. But though his intimacy with Cecilia was encreaſed, though his admiration of her was conſpicuous, and his fondneſs for her ſociety ſeemed to grow with the enjoyment of it, he yet never manifeſted any doubt of her engagement with the Baronet, nor betrayed either intention or deſire to ſupplant him. Cecilia, however, repined not much at the miſtake, ſince ſhe thought it might be inſtrumental to procuring her a more impartial acquaintance with his character, than ſhe could rationally expect, if, as ſhe hoped, the explanation of his error ſhould make him ſeek her good opinion with more ſtudy and deſign.

To ſatisfy herſelf not only concerning the brother but the ſiſter, ſhe again viſited Miſs Belfield,

Belfield, and had the pleaſure of finding her in better ſpirits, and hearing that the *noble friend* of her brother, whom ſhe had already mentioned, and whom Cecilia had before ſuſpected to be young Delvile, had now pointed out to him a method of conduct by which his affairs might be decently retrieved, and himſelf creditably employed. Miſs Belfield ſpoke of the plan with the higheſt ſatisfaction; yet ſhe acknowledged that her mother was extremely diſcontented with it, and that her brother himſelf was rather led by ſhame than inclination to its adoption. Yet he was evidently eaſier in his mind, though far from happy, and already ſo much better, that Mr. Rupil ſaid he would very ſoon be able to leave his room.

Such was the quiet and contented ſituation of Cecilia, when one evening, which was deſtined for company at home, while ſhe was alone in the drawing-room, which Mrs. Harrel had juſt left to anſwer a note, Sir Robert Floyer accidentally came up ſtairs before the other gentlemen.

"Ha!" cried he, the moment he ſaw her, "at laſt have I the good fortune to meet with you alone! This, indeed, is a favour I thought I was always to be denied."

He was then approaching her; but Cecilia, who ſhrunk involuntary at the ſight of him, was retreating haſtily to quit the room, when ſuddenly recollecting that no better opportunity

portunity might ever offer for a final explanation with him, ſhe irreſolutely ſtopt; and Sir Robert, immediately following, took her hand, and preſſing it to his lips as ſhe endeavoured to withdraw it, exclaimed, "You are a moſt charming creature!" when the door was opened, and young Delvile at the ſame moment was announced and appeared. Cecilia, colouring violently, and extremely chagrined, haſtily diſengaged herſelf from his hold. Delvile ſeemed uncertain whether he ought not to retire, which Sir Robert perceiving, bowed to him with an air of mingled triumph and vexation, and ſaid, "Sir, your moſt obedient!"

The doubt, however, in which every one appeared of what was next to be done, was immediately removed by the return of Mrs. Harrel, and the arrival at almoſt the ſame moment of more company.

The reſt of the evening was ſpent, on the part of Cecilia, moſt painfully: the explanation ſhe had planned had ended in worſe than nothing, for by ſuffering the Baronet to detain her, ſhe had rather ſhewn a diſpoſition to oblige, than any intention to diſcard him; and the ſituation in which ſhe had been ſurpriſed by young Delvile, was the laſt to clear the ſuſpicions ſhe ſo little wiſhed him to harbour: while, on his part, the accident ſeemed to occaſion no other alteration than *that of* rendering him more than uſually aſſi-

duous

tious to give way to Sir Robert whenever he approached her.

Nor was Sir Robert ſlack in taking advantage of this attention: he was highly in ſpirits, talked to her with more than common freedom, and wore the whole evening an air of exulting ſatisfaction.

Cecilia, provoked by this preſumption, hurt by the behaviour of young Delvile, and mortified by the whole affair, determined to leave this miſtake no longer in the power of accident, but to apply immediately to Mr. Delvile ſenior, and deſire him, as her guardian, to wait upon Sir Robert himſelf, and acquaint him that his perſeverance in purſuing her was both uſeleſs and offenſive: and by this method ſhe hoped at once to diſentangle herſelf for ever from the Baronet, and to diſcover more fully the ſentiments of young Delvile: for the provocation ſhe had juſt endured, robbed her of all patience for waiting the advice of Mr. Monckton.

CHAP. V.

An Explanation.

THE following morning, therefore, Cecilia went early to St. James's-Square:

and, after the uſual ceremonies of meſſages and long waiting, ſhe was ſhewn into an apartment where ſhe found Mr. Delvile and his ſon.

She rejoiced to ſee them together, and determined to make known to them both the purport of her viſit: and therefore, after ſome apologies and a little heſitation, ſhe told Mr. Delvile, that encouraged by his offers of ſerving her, ſhe had taken the liberty to call upon him with a view to entreat his aſſiſtance.

Young Delvile, immediately riſing, would have quitted the room; but Cecilia, aſſuring him ſhe rather deſired what ſhe had to ſay ſhould be known than kept ſecret, begged that he would not diſturb himſelf.

Delvile, pleaſed with this permiſſion to hear her, and curious to know what would follow, very readily returned to his ſeat.

"I ſhould by no means," ſhe continued, "have thought of proclaiming even to the moſt intimate of my friends, the partiality which Sir Robert Floyer has been pleaſed to ſhew me, had he left to me the choice of publiſhing or concealing it: but, on the contrary, his own behaviour ſeems intended not merely to diſplay it, but to inſinuate that it meets with my approbation! Mr. Harrel, alſo, urged by too much warmth of friendſhip, has encouraged this belief; nor, *indeed*, do I know at preſent where the miſ-

take

talked, hoped, and now what it is, report has not scrupled to affirm. But I think I ought no longer to neglect it, and therefore I have presumed to solicit your advice in what manner I may most effectually contradict it."

The extreme surprise of young Delvile at this speech was not more evident than pleasant to Cecilia, to whom it accounted for all that had perplexed her in his conduct, while it animated every expectation she wished to encourage.

"The behaviour of Mr. Harrel," answered Mr. Delvile, "has by no means been such as to lead me to forget that his father was the son of a steward of Mr. Grant, who lives in the neighbourhood of my friend and relation the Duke of Derwent: nor can I sufficiently congratulate myself that I have always declined acting with him. The late Dean, indeed, never committed so strange an impropriety as that of nominating Mr. Harrel and Mr. Briggs coadjutors with Mr. Delvile. The impropriety, however, though extremely offensive to me, has never obliterated from my mind the esteem I bore the Dean: nor can I possibly give a greater proof of it than the readiness I have always shewn to offer my counsel and instruction to his niece. Mr. Harrel, therefore, ought certainly to have desired Sir Robert Floyer to acquaint me with his proposals before he gave to him any answer."

"Undoubtedly, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, willing to ſhorten this parading harangue, "but as he neglected that attention, will you think me too impertinent ſhould I entreat the favour of you to ſpeak with Sir Robert yourſelf, and explain to him the total inefficacy of his purſuit, ſince my determination againſt him is unalterable?"

Here the conference was interrupted by the entrance of a ſervant who ſaid ſomething to Mr. Delvile, which occaſioned his apologizing to Cecilia for leaving her for a few moments, and oſtentatiouſly aſſuring her that no buſineſs, however important, ſhould prevent his thinking of her affairs, or detain him from returning to her as ſoon as poſſible.

The aſtoniſhment of young Delvile at the ſtrength of her laſt expreſſion kept him ſilent ſome time after his father left the room: and then, with a countenance that ſtill marked his amazement, he ſaid, "Is it poſſible, Miſs Beverley, that I ſhould twice have been thus egregiouſly deceived; or rather, that the whole town, and even the moſt intimate of your friends, ſhould ſo unaccountably have perſiſted in a miſtake."

"For the town," anſwered Cecilia, "I know not how it can have had any concern in ſo ſmall a matter; but for my intimate friends, I have too few to make it probable they ſhould ever have been ſo ſtrangely *miſinformed*."

"Pardon

"Pardon me," cried he, "it was from one who ought to know, that I had myſelf the intelligence."

"I intreat you, then," ſaid Cecilia, "to acquaint me who it was?"

"Mr. Harrel himſelf; who communicated it to a lady in my hearing, and at a public place."

Cecilia caſt up her eyes in wonder and indignation at a proof ſo incontrovertible of his falſehood, but made not any anſwer.

"Even yet," continued he, "I can ſcarcely feel undeceived; your engagement ſeemed ſo poſitive, your connection ſo irretrievable,—ſo,—ſo *fixed*, I mean—." He heſitated, a little embarraſſed; but then ſuddenly exclaimed, "Yet whence, if to *neither* favourable, if indifferent alike to Sir Robert and to Belfield, whence that animated apprehenſion for their ſafety at the Opera-houſe? whence that never to be forgotten, *Oh ſtop him! good God! will nobody ſtop him!*—Words of anxiety ſo tender! and ſounds that ſtill vibrate in my ear!"

Cecilia, ſtruck with amazement in her turn at the ſtrength of her own expreſſions, bluſhed, and for a few minutes heſitated how to anſwer him; but then, to leave nothing that related to ſo diſagreeable a report in any doubt, ſhe reſolved to tell him ingenuouſly the circumſtances that had occaſioned her alarm; and therefore, though with ſome

pain to her modesty, she confessed her fears that she had herself provoked the affront, though her only view had been to discountenance Sir Robert, without meaning to shew any distinction to Mr. Belfield.

Delvile, who seemed charmed with the candour of this explanation, said, when she had finished it, "You are then at liberty? —— Ah, madam! —how many may rue so dangerous a discovery!"

"Could you think," said Cecilia, endeavouring to speak with her usual ease, "that Sir Robert Floyer would be found so irresistible?"

"Oh no!" cried he, "far otherwise; a thousand times I have wondered at his happiness; a thousand times when I have looked at you, and listened to you, I have thought it impossible! —yet my authority seemed indisputable. And how was I to discredit what was not uttered as a conjecture, but asserted as a fact? asserted, too, by the guardian with whom you lived? and not hinted as a secret, but affirmed as a point settled?"

"Yet surely," said Cecilia, "you have heard me make use of expressions that could not but lead you to suppose there was some mistake, whatever might be the authority which had won your belief."

"No," answered he, "I never supposed *any mistake*, though sometimes I thought

you

you repented your engagement. I concluded, indeed, you had been unwarily drawn in, and I have even, at times, been tempted to acknowledge my ſuſpicions to you, ſtate your independence, and exhort you —— as a *friend*, exhort you — to uſe it with ſpirit, and, if you were ſhackled unwillingly, incautiouſly, or unworthily, to break the chains by which you were confined, and reſtore to yourſelf that freedom of choice, upon the uſe of which all your happineſs muſt ultimately depend. But I doubted if this were honourable to the Baronet;—and what, indeed, was my right to ſuch a liberty? none that every man might not be proud of, a wiſh to do honour to myſelf, under the officious pretence of ſerving the moſt amiable of women."

"Mr. Hurrel," ſaid Cecilia, "has been ſo ſtrangely bigoted to his friend, that in his eagerneſs to manifeſt his regard for him, he ſeems to have forgotten every other conſideration; he would not, elſe, have ſpread ſo widely a report that could ſo ill ſtand enquiry."

"If Sir Robert," returned he, "is himſelf deceived while he deceives others, who can forbear to pity him? for my own part, inſtead of repining that hitherto I have been miſtaken, ought I not rather to bleſs an error that may have been my preſervative from danger?"

Cecilia, distressed in what manner to support her part in the conversation, began now to wish the return of Mr. Delvile; and, not knowing what else to say, she expressed her surprise at his long absence.

"It is not, indeed, well timed," said young Delvile, "just now—at the moment when—" he stopt, and presently exclaiming, "Oh dangerous interval!" he arose from his seat in manifest disorder.

Cecilia arose too, and hastily ringing the bell, said, "Mr. Delvile I am sure is detained, and therefore I will order my chair, and call another time."

"Do I frighten you away?" said he, assuming an appearance more placid.

"No," answered she, "but I would not hasten Mr. Delvile."

A servant then came, and said the chair was ready.

She would immediately have followed him, but young Delvile again speaking, she stopt a moment to hear him. "I fear," said he, with much hesitation, "I have strangely exposed myself —— and that you cannot—but the extreme astonishment—" he stopt again, in the utmost confusion, and then adding "you will permit me to attend you to the chair," he handed her down stairs, and in quitting her, bowed without saying a word more.

Cecilia, who was almost wholly indifferent

equal to every part of the explanation but that which had actually passed, was now in a state of felicity more delightful than any she had ever before experienced. She had not a doubt remaining of her influence over the mind of young Delvile, and the surprise which had made him rather betray than express his regard, was infinitely more flattering and satisfactory to her than any formal or direct declaration. She had now convinced him she was disengaged, and in return, though without seeming to intend it, he had convinced her of the deep interest which he took in the discovery. His perturbation, the words which escaped him, and his evident struggle to say no more, were proofs just such as she wished to receive of his partial admiration, since while they satisfied her heart, they also soothed her pride, by shewing a diffidence of success which assured her that her own secret was still sacred, and that no weakness or inadvertency on her part had robbed her of the power of mingling dignity with the frankness with which she meant to receive his addresses. All, therefore, that now employed her care, was to keep off any indissoluble engagement till each should be better known to the other.

For this reserve, however, she had less immediate occasion than she expected; she saw no more of young Delvile that day; neither did he appear the next. The third

home, that had neither truth nor justice to support them.

Mr. Harrel, with his usual levity and carelessness, laughed at the charge, but denied any belief in her displeasure, and affected to think she was merely playing the coquet, while Sir Robert was not the less her decided choice.

Provoked and wearied, Cecilia resolved no longer to depend upon any body but herself for the management of her own affairs; and therefore, to conclude the business without any possibility of farther cavilling, she wrote the following note to Sir Robert herself.

To Sir Robert Floyer, Bart.

Miss Beverley presents her compliments to Sir Robert Floyer, and as she has some reason to fear Mr. Harrel did not explicitly acquaint him with her answer to the commission with which he was entrusted, she thinks it necessary, in order to obviate any possible misunderstanding, to take this method of returning him thanks for the honour of his good opinion, but of begging at the same time that he would not lose a moment upon her account, as her thanks are all she can now, or ever, offer in return.

Portman Square,
May 11th, 1779.

To

To this note Cecilia received no answer; but she had the pleasure to observe that Sir Robert forbore his usual visit on the day she sent it, and, though he appeared again the day following, he never spoke to her, and seemed sullen and out of humour.

Yet still young Delvile came not, and still, as her surprise encreased, her tranquillity was diminished. She could form no excuse for his delay, nor conjecture any reason for his absence. Every motive seemed to favour his seeking, and not one his shunning her; the explanation which had so lately passed had informed him he had no rival to fear, and the manner in which he had heard it assured her the information was not indifferent to him; why, then, so assiduous in his visits when he thought her engaged, and so slack in all attendance when he knew she was at liberty?

CHAP. VI.

A MURMURING.

UNABLE to relieve herself from this perplexity, Cecilia, to divert her chagrin, again visited Miss Belfield. She had then

then the pleaſure to hear that her brother was much recovered, and had been able, the preceding day, to take an airing, which he had borne ſo well that Mr. Rupil had charged him to uſe the ſame exercife every morning.

"And will he?" ſaid Cecilia.

"No, madam, I am ſadly afraid not," ſhe anſwered, "for coach-hire is very expenſive, and we are willing, now, to ſave all we can in order to help fitting him out for going abroad."

Cecilia then earneſtly entreated her to accept ſome aſſiſtance; but ſhe aſſured her ſhe did not dare without the conſent of her mother, which, however, ſhe undertook to obtain.

The next day, when Cecilia called to hear her ſucceſs, Mrs. Belfield, who hitherto had kept out of ſight, made her appearance. She found her, alike in perſon, manners, and converſation, a coarſe and ordinary woman, not more unlike her ſon in talents and acquired accompliſhments, than diſſimilar to her daughter in ſoftneſs and natural delicacy.

The moment Cecilia was ſeated, ſhe began, without waiting for any ceremony, or requiring any ſolicitation, abruptly to talk of her affairs, and reſignedly to relate her misfortunes.

"I find, madam," ſhe ſaid, "you have been ſo kind as to viſit my daughter Henny a great many times, but as I have no time

for

for company. I have always kept out of the way, having other things to do than ſit ſtill to talk. I have had a ſad time of it here, ma'am, with my poor ſon's illneſs, having no conveniencies about me, and much ado to make him mind me; for he's all for having his own way, poor dear ſoul; and I'm ſure I don't know who could contradict him, for it's what I never had the heart to do. But then, ma'am, what is to come of it? You ſee how bad things go! for though I have got a very good income, it won't do for every thing. And if it was as much again, I ſhould want to ſave it all now. For here my poor ſon, you ſee, is reduced all in a minute, as one may ſay, from being one of the firſt gentlemen in the town, to a mere poor object, without a farthing in the world!"

"He is, however, I hope, now much better in his health?" ſaid Cecilia.

"Yes, madam, thank heaven; for if he was worſe, thoſe might tell of it that would, for I'm ſure I ſhould never live to hear of it. He has been the beſt ſon in the world, madam, and uſed nothing but the beſt company, for I ſpared neither pains nor coſt to bring him up genteelly, and I believe there's not a nobleman in the land that looks more the gentleman. However, there's come no good of it, for though his acquaintances was all among the firſt quality, he never received

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the value of a penny from the beſt of them. So I have no great need to be proud. But I meant for the beſt, though I have often enough wiſhed I had not meddled in the matter, but left him to be brought up in the ſhop, as his father was before him."

"His preſent plan, however," ſaid Cecilia, "will I hope make you ample amends both for your ſufferings and your tenderneſs."

"What, madam, when he is going to leave me, and ſettle in foreign parts? If you was a mother yourſelf, madam, you would not think that ſuch good amends."

"Settle?" ſaid Cecilia, "No, he only goes for a year or two."

"That's more than I can ſay, madam, or any body elſe; and nobody knows what may happen in that time. And how I ſhall keep myſelf up when he's beyond ſeas, I am ſure I don't know, for he has always been the pride of my life, and every penny I ſaved for him, I thought to have been paid in pounds."

"You will ſtill have your daughter, and ſhe ſeems ſo amiable, that I am ſure you can want no conſolation ſhe will not endeavour to give you."

"But what is a daughter, madam, to ſuch a ſon as mine? a ſon that I thought to have ſeen living like a prince, and ſending his own coach for me to dine with him. And now he's going to be taken away from me,

me, and nobody knows if I shall live till he could back. But I may thank myself, for if I had not been content to see him brought up in the shop—yet all the world would have cried shame upon it, for when he was quite a child in arms, the people used all to say he was born to be a gentleman, and would live to make many a fine lady's heart ache."

"If he can but make *your* heart easy," said Cecilia, smiling, "we will not grieve that the fine ladies should escape the prophecy."

"O, ma'am, I don't mean by that to say he has been over gay among the ladies, for it's a thing I never heard of him; and I dare say if any lady was to take a fancy to him, she'd find there was not a modester young man in the world. But you must needs think what a hardship it is to me to have him turn out so unlucky, after all I have done for him, when I thought to have seen him at the top of the tree, as one may say!"

"He will yet, I hope," said Cecilia, "make you rejoice in all your kindness to him: his health is already returning, and his affairs wear again a more prosperous aspect."

"But do you suppose, ma'am, that having him sent two or three hundred miles away from me, with some young master to take care of, is the way to make up to me what I have gone through for him? why I used to

deny

deny myself every thing in the world, in or-
der to ſave money to buy him fine cloaths,
and let him go to the Opera, and Ranelagh,
and ſuch ſort of places, that he might keep
himſelf in fortune's way! and now you ſee
the end of it; here he is, in a little ſhabby
room up two pair of ſtairs, with not one of
the great folks coming near him, to ſee if he's
ſo much as dead or alive."

"I do not wonder," ſaid Cecilia, "that
you reſent their ſhewing ſo little gratitude
for the pleaſure and entertainment they have
formerly received from him: but comfort
yourſelf that it will at leaſt ſecure you from
any ſimilar diſappointment, as Mr. Delvile
will, in future, be guarded from forming
ſuch precarious expectations."

"But what good will that do me, ma'am,
for all the money he has been throwing after
them all this while? do you think I would
have ſcraped it up for him, and gone without
every thing in the world, to ſee it all end in
this manner? why he might as well have
been brought up the commoneſt journeyman,
for any comfort I ſhall have of him at this
rate. And ſuppoſe he ſhould be drowned in
going beyond ſeas, what am I to do then?"

"You muſt not," ſaid Cecilia, "indulge
ſuch fears; I doubt not but your ſon will re-
turn well, and return all that you wiſh."

"Nobody knows that, ma'am; and the
only way to be certain is for him not to go at

ally and I'm surprised, ma'am, you can wish him to make such a journey to nobody knows where, with nothing but a young master that he must as good as teach his A. B. C. all the way they go!"

"Certainly," said Cecilia, amazed at this accusation, "I should not wish him to go abroad, if any thing more eligible could be done by his remaining in England; but as no prospect of that sort seems before him, you must endeavour to reconcile yourself to parting with him."

"Yes, but how am I to do that, when I don't know if ever I shall see him again? Who could have thought of his living so among the great folks, and then coming to want! I'm sure I thought they'd have provided for him like a son of their own, for he used to go about to all the public places just as they did themselves. Day after day I used to be counting for when he would come to tell me he'd got a place at court, or something of that sort, for I never could tell what it would be: and then the next news I heard, was that he was shut up in this poor bit of a place, with nobody troubling their heads about him! however, I'll never be persuaded but he might have done better, if he would but have spoke a good word for himself, or else have let me done it for him: instead of which, he never would so much as let me see any of his grand friends, though I would

not have made the least scruple in the world to have asked them for any thing he had a mind to."

Cecilia again endeavoured to give her comfort; but finding her only satisfaction was to express her discontent, she arose to take leave. But, turning first to Miss Belfield, contrived to make a private enquiry whether she might repeat her offer of assistance. A downcast and dejected look answering in the affirmative, she put into her hand a ten pound bank note, and wishing them good morning, hurried out of the room.

Miss Belfield was running after her, but stopt by her mother, who called out, "what is it?—How much is it?——Let me look at it!"—And then, following Cecilia herself, she thanked her aloud all the way down stairs for her *genteelness*, assuring her she would not fail making it known to her son.

Cecilia at this declaration turned back, and exhorted her by no means to mention it; after which she got into her chair, and returned home, pitying Miss Belfield for the unjust partiality shewn to her brother, and excusing the proud shame he had manifested of his relations, from the vulgarity and selfishness of her who was at the head of them.

Almost a fortnight had now elapsed since her explanation with young Delville, yet not once had he been in Portman-Square, though

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in the fortnight which had preceded, scarce a day had passed which had not afforded him some pretence for calling there.

At length a note arrived from Mrs. Delvile. It contained the most flattering reproaches for her long absence, and a pressing invitation that she would dine and spend the next day with her.

Cecilia, who had merely denied herself the pleasure of this visit from an apprehension of seeming too desirous of keeping up the connexion, now, from the same sense of propriety, determined upon making it, wishing equally to avoid all appearance of consciousness, either by seeking or avoiding the intimacy of the family.

Not a little was her anxiety to know in what manner young Delvile would receive her, whether he would be grave or gay, agitated, as during their last conversation, or easy, as in the meetings which had preceded it.

She found Mrs. Delvile, however, alone, and extremely kind to her, yet much surprised, and half displeased, that she had so long been absent. Cecilia, though somewhat distressed what excuses to offer, was happy to find herself so highly in favour, and not very reluctant to promise more frequent visits in future.

They were then summoned to dinner, but still no young Delvile was visible: they were joined

character, would not have occasioned her the ſmalleſt emotion, had it merely related to him or to herſelf: but as it concerned Lord Ernolf, ſhe regarded it as alſo concerning his ſon; and ſhe found that, far from trying to promote the union Mr. Monckton had told her he had planned, he did not ſeem even to think of it, but, on the contrary, propoſed and ſeconded with all his intereſt another alliance.

This, added to the behaviour of young Delvile, made her ſuſpect that ſome engagement was in agitation on his own part, and that while ſhe thought him ſo aſſiduous only to avoid her, he was ſimply occupied in ſeeking another. This painful ſuggeſtion, which every thing ſeemed to confirm, again overſet all her ſchemes, and deſtroyed all her viſionary happineſs. Yet how to reconcile it with what had paſſed at their laſt meeting ſhe knew not: ſhe had then every reaſon to believe that his heart was in her power, and that courage, or an opportunity more ſeaſonable, was all he wanted to make known his devotion to her? why, then, ſhun if he loved her? why, if he loved her not, ſeem ſo perturbed at the explanation of her independance?

A very little time, however, ſhe hoped would unravel this myſtery; in two days, the entertainment which Mr. Harrel had planned, to deceive the world by an appearance of

acquaintance to which he had loſt all title, was to take place; young Delville, in common with every other perſon who had ever been ſeen at the houſe, had early received an invitation, which he had readily promiſed to accept ſome time before the converſation that ſeemed the period of their acquaintance had paſſed. Should he, after being ſo long engaged, fail to keep his appointment, ſhe could no longer have any doubt of the juſtice of her conjecture; ſhould he, on the contrary, again appear, from his behaviour and his looks ſhe might perhaps be able to gather why he had ſo long been abſent.

CHAP. VII.

A ROUT.

THE day at length arrived of which the evening and the entrance of company were, for the firſt time, as eagerly wiſhed by Cecilia as by her diſſipated hoſt and hoſteſs. No expence and no pains had been ſpared to render this long projected entertainment ſplendid and elegant; it was to begin with a concert, which was to be followed by a ball, and ſucceeded by a ſupper.

Cecilia, though unuſually anxious about her own affairs, was not ſo engroſſed by them as to behold with indifference a ſcene of ſuch unjuſtifiable extravagance; it contributed to render her thoughtful and uneaſy, and to deprive her of all mental power of participating in the gaiety of the aſſembly. Mr. Arnott was yet more deeply affected by the mad folly of the ſcheme, and received from the whole evening no other ſatisfaction than that which a look of ſympathetic concern from Cecilia occaſionally afforded him.

Till nine o'clock no company appeared, except Sir Robert Floyer, who ſtayed from dinner time, and Mr. Morrice, who having received an invitation for the evening, was ſo much delighted with the permiſſion to again enter the houſe, that he made uſe of it between ſix and ſeven o'clock, and before the family had left the dining parlour. He apologized with the utmoſt humility to Cecilia for the unfortunate accident at the Pantheon; but as to her it had been productive of nothing but pleaſure, by exciting in young Delvile the moſt flattering alarm for her ſafety, ſhe found no great difficulty in according him her pardon.

Among thoſe who came in the firſt crowd was Mr. Monckton, who, had he been equally unconſcious of ſiniſter views, would, in following his own inclination, have been as early in his attendance as Mr. Morrice;

but

but who, to obviate all ſuſpicious remarks, conformed to the faſhionable tardineſs of the times.

Cecilia's chief apprehenſion for the evening was that Sir Robert Floyer would aſk her to dance with him, which ſhe could not refuſe without ſitting ſtill during the ball, nor accept, after the reports ſhe knew to be ſpread, without ſeeming to give a public ſanction to them. To Mr. Monckton therefore, innocently conſidering him as a married man and her old friend, ſhe frankly told her diſtreſs, adding, by way of excuſe for the hint, that the partners were to be changed every two dances.

Mr. Monckton, though his principal ſtudy was carefully to avoid all public gallantry or aſſiduity towards Cecilia, had not the forbearance to reſiſt this intimation, and therefore ſhe had the pleaſure of telling Sir Robert, when he aſked the honour of her hand for the two firſt dances, that ſhe was already engaged.

She then expected that he would immediately ſecure her for the two following; but, to her great joy, he was ſo much piqued by the evident pleaſure with which ſhe announced her engagement, that he proudly walked away without adding another word.

Much ſatisfied with this arrangement, and not without hopes that, if ſhe was at liberty when he arrived, ſhe might be applied to by

young Delvile, ſhe now endeavoured to procure herſelf a place in the muſic room.

This, with ſome difficulty, ſhe effected; but though there was an excellent concert, in which ſeveral capital performers played and ſung, ſhe found it impoſſible to hear a note, as ſhe chanced to be ſeated juſt by Miſs Leeſon, and two other young ladies, who were paying one another compliments upon their dreſs and their looks, ſettling to dance in the ſame cotillon, gueſſing who would begin the minuets, and wondering there were not more gentlemen. Yet, in the midſt of this unmeaning converſation, of which ſhe remarked that Miſs Leeſon bore the principal part, not one of them failed, from time to time, to exclaim with great rapture, "*What ſweet muſic?*—" "*Oh how charming!*" "*Did you ever hear any thing ſo delightful?*—"

"Ah," ſaid Cecilia to Mr. Goſport, who now approached her, "but for your explanatory obſervations, how much would the ſudden loquacity of this *ſupercilious* lady, whom I had imagined all but dumb, have perplext me!"

"Thoſe who are moſt ſilent to ſtrangers," anſwered Mr. Goſport, "commonly talk moſt fluently to their inmates, for they are deeply in arrears, and eager to pay off their debts. Miſs Leeſon now is in her proper ſet, and therefore appears in her natural character: *and the poor* girl's joy in being able to utter

all

all the nothings she has painfully hoarded while separated from her coterie, gives to her now the wild transport of a bird just let loose from a cage. I rejoice to see the little creature at liberty, for what can be so melancholy as a forced appearance of thinking, where there are no materials for such an occupation?"

Soon after, Miss Larolles, who was laughing immoderately, contrived to crowd herself into their party, calling out to them, "O you have had the greatest loss in the world! if you had but been in the next room just now!—there's the drollest figure there you can conceive; enough to frighten one to look at him." And presently she added, "O Lord, if you step a little this way, you may see him!"

Then followed a general tittering, accompanied with exclamations of, "Lord, what a fright!" "It's enough to kill one with laughing to look at him!" "Did you ever see such a horrid creature in your life?" And soon after, one of them screamed out, "O Lord, see!—he's grinning at Miss Beverley!"

Cecilia then turned her head towards the door, and there, to her own as well as her neighbours amazement, she perceived Mr. Briggs! who, in order to look about him at his ease, was standing upon a chair, from which, having singled her out, he was re-

garding her with a facetious ſmirk, which, when it caught her eye, was converted into a familiar nod.

She returned his ſalutation, but was not much charmed to obſerve, that preſently deſcending from his exalted poſt, which had moved the wonder and riſibility of all the company, he made a motion to approach her; for which purpoſe, regardleſs of either ladies or gentlemen in his way, he ſturdily puſhed forward, with the ſame unconcerned hardineſs he would have forced himſelf through a crowd in the ſtreet; and taking not the ſmalleſt notice of their frowns, ſupplications that he would ſtand ſtill, and exclamations of, "Pray, Sir!"—"Lord, how troubleſome!" and, "Sir, I do aſſure you here's no room!" he fairly and adroitly elbowed them from him till he reached her ſeat: and then, with a waggiſh grin, he looked round, to ſhew he had got the better, and to ſee whom he had diſcompoſed.

When he had enjoyed this triumph, he turned to Cecilia, and chucking her under the chin, ſaid, "Well, my little duck, how goes it? got to you at laſt; ſqueezed my way; would not be nicked; warrant I'll mob with the beſt of them! Look here! all in a heat!—hot as the dog-days."

And then, to the utter conſternation of the company, he took off his wig to wipe his head!—which occaſioned ſuch univerſal horrour,

horrour, that all who were near the door escaped into other apartments, while those who were too much enclosed for flight, with one accord turned away their heads.

Captain Arelby, being applied to by some of the ladies to remonstrate upon this unexampled behaviour, advanced to him, and said, "I am quite *abîmé*, Sir, to incommode you, but the commands of the ladies are insuperable. Give me leave, Sir, to entreat that you would put on your wig."

"My wig?" cried he, "ay, ay, shall in a moment, only want to wipe my head first."

"I am quite *assommé*, Sir," returned the Captain, "to disturb you, but I must really hint you don't comprehend me: the ladies are extremely inconvenienced by these sort of sights, and we make it a principle they should never be *accablées* with them."

"Anan!" cried Mr. Briggs, staring.

"I say, Sir," replied the Captain, "the ladies are quite *au desespoir* that you will not cover your head."

"What for?" cried he, "what's the matter with my head? ne'er a man here got a better! very good stuff in it! won't change it with ne'er a one of you!"

And then, half unconscious of the offence he had given, and half angry at the rebuke he had received, he leisurely compleated his design, and again put on his wig, settling it to his face with as much composure as if he

had performed the operation in his own diſſing-room.

The Captain having gained his point, walked away, making, however, various grimaces of diſguſt, and whiſpering from ſide to ſide, "he's the moſt petrifying fellow I ever was *obſæde* by!"

Mr. Briggs then, with much deriſion, and ſundry diſtortions of countenance, liſtened to an Italian ſong, after which, he buſtled back to the outer apartment, in ſearch of Cecilia, who, aſhamed of ſeeming a party in the diſturbance he had excited, had taken the opportunity of his diſpute with the Captain to run into the next room; where, however, he preſently found her, while ſhe was giving an account to Mr. Goſport of her connexion with him, to which Morrice, ever curious and eager to know what was going forward, was alſo liſtening.

"Ah, little chick!" cried he, "got to you again! ſoon out-joſtle thoſe jemmy ſparks! But where's the ſupper? ſee nothing of the ſupper! Time to go to bed,—ſuppoſe there is none; all a take in; nothing but a little piping."

"Supper, Sir?" cried Cecilia, "the Concert is not over yet. Was ſupper mentioned in your card of invitation?"

"Ay, to be ſure, ſhould not have come elſe. Don't viſit often, always coſts money. Wiſh I had not come now. wore a hole

under my shoe; hardly a crack in it before."

"Why you did not walk, Sir?"

"Did, did, why not? Might as well have stayed away though; daubed my best coat, like to have spoilt it."

"So much the better for the taylors, Sir," said Morrice, pertly, "for then you must have another."

"Another! what for? ha'n't had this seven years, just as good as new."

"I hope," said Cecilia, "you had not another fall?"

"Worse, worse; like to have lost my bundle."

"What bundle, Sir?"

"Best coat and waistcoat; brought 'em in my handkerchief, purpose to save them. When will Mr. Harrel do as much?"

"But had you no apprehensions, Sir," said Mr. Gosport drily, "that the handkerchief would be the sooner worn out for having a knot tied in it?"

"Took care of that, tied it slack. Met an unlucky boy: little dog gave it a pluck; knot slipt; coat and waistcoat popt out."

"But what became of the boy, Sir?" cried Morrice, "I hope he got off?"

"Could not run for laughing; caught him in a minute; gave him something to laugh for; drubbed him soundly."

"O poor fellow!" cried Morrice, with a

loud hallow, "I am really ſorry for him. But pray, Sir, what became of your beſt coat and waiſtcoat while you gave him this drubbing? did you leave them in the dirt?"

"No, Mr. Nincompoop," anſwered Briggs, angrily, "I put them on a ſtall."

"That was a perilous expedient, Sir," ſaid Mr. Goſport, "and I ſhould fear might be attended with ill conſequences, for the owner of the ſtall would be apt to expect ſome little *douceur*. How did you manage, Sir?"

"Bought a halfpenny worth of apples. Serve for ſupper to-morrow night."

"But how, Sir, did you get your cloaths dried, or cleaned?"

"Went to an alehouſe; coſt me half a pint."

"And pray, Sir," cried Morrice, "where, at laſt, did you make your toilette?"

"Sha'n't tell, ſha'n't tell; aſk no more queſtions. What ſignifies where a man ſlips on a coat and waiſtcoat?"

"Why, Sir, this will prove an expenſive expedition to you," ſaid Mr. Goſport, very gravely: "Have you caſt up what it may coſt you?"

"More than it's worth, more than it's worth," anſwered he, pettiſhly; "ha'n't laid out ſo much in pleaſure theſe five years."

"Ha! ha!" cried Morrice, hallowing aloud,

aloud, why it can't be more than ſixpence in all."

"Sixpence!" repeated he, ſcornfully, "if you don't know the value of ſixpence, you'll never be worth fivepence three farthings. How do think got rich, hay? — by wearing fine coats, and frizzling my pate? No, no; Maſter Harrel for that! aſk him if he'll caſt an account with me! — never knew a man worth a penny with ſuch a coat as that on."

Morrice again laughed, and again Mr. Briggs reproved him; and Cecilia, taking advantage of the ſquabble, ſtole back to the muſic-room.

Here, in a few minutes, Mrs. Panton, a lady who frequently viſited at the houſe, approached Cecilia, followed by a gentleman, whom ſhe had never before ſeen, but who was ſo evidently charmed with her, that he had looked at no other object ſince his entrance into the houſe.

Mrs. Panton, preſenting him to her by the name of Mr. Marriot, told her he had begged her interceſſion for the honour of her hand in the two firſt dances: and the moment ſhe anſwered that ſhe was already engaged, the ſame requeſt was made for the two following. Cecilia had then no excuſe, and was therefore obliged to accept him.

The hope ſhe had entertained in the early part of the evening, was already almoſt wholly extinguiſhed! Delvile appeared not!

though her eye watched the entrance of every new visitor, and her vexation made her believe that the whole town was absent.

When the Concert was over, the company joined promiscuously for chat and refreshments before the ball, and Mr. Gosport advanced to Cecilia, to relate a ridiculous dispute which had just passed between Mrs. Briggs and Morrice.

"You, Mr. Gosport," said Cecilia, who seem to make the *minutiæ* of absurd characters your study, can explain to me, perhaps, why Mr. Briggs seems to have as much pleasure in proclaiming his meanness, as in boasting his wealth."

"Because," answered Mr. Gosport, "he knows them, in his own affairs, to be so nearly allied, that but for practising the one, he had never possessed the other; ignorant, therefore, of all discrimination, except, indeed of pounds, shillings, and pence, he supposes them necessarily inseparable, because with him they were united. What you, however, call meanness, he thinks wisdom; and recollects, therefore, not with shame but with triumph, the various little arts and subterfuges by which his coffers have been filled.

Here Lord Ernolf, concluding Cecilia still disengaged from seeing her only discourse with *Mr. Gosport* and Mr. Monckton, one of whom

whom was old enough to be her father, and the other was a *married man*, advanced, and presented to her Lord Derford, his son, a youth not yet of age, solicited for him the honour of her hand as his partner.

Cecilia having a double excuse, easily declined this proposal; Lord Ernolf, however, was too earnest to be repulsed, and told her he should again try his interest when her two present engagements were fulfilled. Hopeless, now, of young Delvile, she heard this intimation with indifference; and was accompanying Mr. Monckton into the ball-room, when Miss Larolles, flying towards her with an air of infinite eagerness, caught her hand, and said in a whisper, "pray let me wish you joy!"

"Certainly!" said Cecilia, "but pray let me ask you of what?"

"O Lord, now," answered she, "I am sure you know what I mean; but you must know I have a prodigious monstrous great favour to beg of you: now pray don't refuse me, I assure you if you do, I shall be so mortified you've no notion."

"Well, what is it?"

"Nothing but to let me be one of your bride maids. I assure you I shall take it as the greatest favour in the world."

"My bridemaid!" cried Cecilia; "but do you not think the bridegroom himself will

will be rather offended to find a bridemaid appointed, before he is even thought of."

"O pray, now," cried ſhe, "don't be ill-natured, for if you are, you've no idea how I ſhall be diſappointed. Only conceive what happened to me three weeks ago! you muſt know I was invited to Miſs Clinton's wedding, and ſo I made up a new dreſs on purpoſe, in a very particular ſort of ſhape, quite of my own invention, and it had the ſweeteſt effect you can conceive; well, and when the time came, do you know her mother happened to die! Never any thing was ſo exceſſive unlucky, for now ſhe won't be married this half year, and my dreſs will be quite old and yellow; for it's all white, and the moſt beautiful thing you ever ſaw in your life."

"Upon my word you are very obliging!" cried Cecilia, laughing; "and pray do you make intereſt regularly round with all your female acquaintance to be married upon this occaſion, or am I the only one you think this diſtreſs will work upon?"

"Now how exceſſive teazing!" cried Miſs Larolles, "when you know ſo well what I mean, and when all the town knows as well as myſelf."

Cecilia then ſeriouſly enquired whether ſhe had really any meaning at all.

"Lord yes," anſwered ſhe, "you know I mean

mean about Sir Robert Floyer: for I'm told you've quite refuſed Lord Denford."

"And are you alſo told that I have accepted Sir Robert Floyer?"

"O dear yes!—the jewels are bought, and the equipages are built; it's quite a ſettled thing, I know very well."

Cecilia then very gravely began an attempt to undeceive her; but the dancing beginning alſo at the ſame time, ſhe ſtayed not to hear her, hurrying, with a beating heart, to the place of action. Mr. Monckton and his fair partner then followed, mutually exclaiming againſt Mr. Harrel's impenetrable conduct; of which Cecilia, however, in a ſhort time ceaſed wholly to think, for as ſoon as the firſt cotillon was over, ſhe perceived young Delvile juſt walking into the room.

Surpriſe, pleaſure, and confuſion aſſailed her all at once; ſhe had entirely given up her expectation of ſeeing him, and an abſence ſo determined had led her to conclude he had purſuits which ought to make her join in wiſhing it lengthened; but now he appeared, that concluſion, with the fear that gave riſe to it, vaniſhed; and ſhe regretted nothing but the unfortunate ſucceſſion of engagements which would prevent her dancing with him at all, and probably keep off all converſation with him till ſupper time.

She ſoon, however, perceived, a change in his air and behaviour that extremely aſtoniſhed

nished her: he looked grave and thoughtful, saluted her at a distance, shewed no sign of any intention to approach her, regarded the dancing and dancers as a public spectacle in which he had no chance of personal interest, and seemed wholly altered, not merely with respect to her, but to himself, as his former eagerness for her society was not more abated than his former general gaiety.

She had no time, however, for comments, as she was presently called to the second dotillon; but the confused and unpleasant ideas which, without waiting for time or reflection, crowded upon her imagination on observing his behaviour, were not more depressing to herself, than obvious to her partner; Mr. Monckton by the change in her countenance first perceived the entrance of young Delvile, and by her apparent emotion and uneasiness, readily penetrated into the state of her mind; he was confirmed that her affections were engaged; he saw, too, that she was doubtful with what return.

The grief with which he made the first discovery, was somewhat lessened by the hopes he conceived from the second; yet the evening was to him as painful as to Cecilia, since he now knew that whatever prosperity might ultimately attend his address and assiduity, her heart was not her own to bestow; and that even were he sure of young Delvile's indifference, and actually at liberty to make pro-

propose for himself, the time of being first in her esteem was at an end, and the long-cherished good opinion which he had hoped would have ripened into affection, might now be wholly undermined by the sudden impression of a lively stranger, without trouble to himself, and perhaps without pleasure!

Reflections such as these wholly embittered the delight he had promised himself from dancing with her, and took from him all power to combat the anxiety with which she was seized: when the second cotillon, therefore, was over, instead of following her to a seat, or taking the privilege of his present situation to converse with her, the jealousy rising in his breast robbed him of all satisfaction, and gave to him no other desire than to judge its justice by watching her motions at a distance.

Mean while Cecilia, inattentive whether he accompanied or quitted her, proceeded to the first vacant seat. Young Delvile was standing near it, and in a short time, but rather as if he could not avoid than as if he wished it, he came to enquire how she did.

The simplest question, in the then situation of her mind, was sufficient to confuse her, and though she answered, she hardly knew what he had asked. A minute's recollection, however, restored an apparent composure, and she talked to him of Mrs. Delvile, with her usual partial regard for that lady,

lady, and with an earneſt endeavour to ſeem unconſcious of any alteration in his behaviour.

Yet, to him, even this trifling and general converſation was evidently painful, and he looked relieved by the approach of Sir Robert Floyer, who ſoon after joined them.

At this time a young lady who was ſitting by Cecilia, called to a ſervant who was paſſing, for a glaſs of lemonade: Cecilia deſired he would bring her one alſo; but Delville, not ſorry to break off the diſcourſe, ſaid he would himſelf be her cup-bearer, and for that purpoſe went away.

A moment after, the ſervant returned with ſome lemonade to Cecilia's neighbour, and Sir Robert, taking a glaſs from him, brought it to Cecilia at the very inſtant young Delville came with another.

"I think I am before-hand with you, Sir," ſaid the inſolent Baronet.

"No, Sir," anſwered young Delville, "I think we were both in together: Miſs Beverley, however, is ſteward of the race, and we muſt ſubmit to her deciſion."

"Well, madam," cried Sir Robert, "here we ſtand, waiting your pleaſure. Which is to be the happy man!"

"Each, I hope," anſwered Cecilia, with admirable preſence of mind, "ſince I expect no leſs than that you will both do me the honour of drinking my health."

This

This little contrivance, which ſaved her alike from ſhewing favour or giving offence, could not but be applauded by both parties; and while they obeyed her orders, ſhe took a third glaſs herſelf from the ſervant.

While this was paſſing, Mr. Briggs, again perceiving her, ſtumpt haſtily towards her, calling out, "Ah ha! my duck! what's that? got ſomething nice? Come here, my lad; taſte it myſelf."

He then took a glaſs, but having only put it to his mouth, made a wry face, and returned it, ſaying "Bad! bad! poor punch indeed!—not a drop of rum in it!"

"So much the better, Sir," cried Morrice, who diverted himſelf by following him, "for then you ſee the maſter of the houſe ſpares in ſomething, and you ſaid he ſpared in nothing."

"Don't ſpare in fools!" returned Mr. Briggs, "keeps them in plenty."

"No, Sir, not in any out of the way characters," anſwered Morrice.

"So much the worſe," cried Briggs, "ſo much the worſe! Eat him out of houſe and home; won't leave him a rag to his back, nor a penny in his pocket. Never mind 'em, my little duck; mind none of your guardians but me: t'other two a'nt worth a rum."

Cecilia, ſomewhat aſhamed of this ſpeech, looked towards young Delville, in whom it

occa-

occasioned the first smile she had seen that evening.

"Been looking about for you!" continued Briggs, nodding sagaciously; "believe I've found one will do. Guess what I mean;—100,000*l.*—hay?—what say to that? any thing better at the west end of the town?"

"100,000*l.*" cried Morrice, "and pray, Sir, who may this be?"

"Not you, Mr. Jackanapes! sure of that. A'n't quite positive he'll have you, neither. Think he will, though."

"Pray, Sir, what age is he?" cried the never-daunted Morrice.

"Why about—let's see—don't know, never heard,—what signifies?"

"But, Sir, he's an old man, I suppose, by being so rich?"

"Old? no, no such thing; about my own standing."

"What, Sir, and do you propose him for an husband to Miss Beverley?"

"Why not? know every a one warmer? think Master Harrel will get her a better; or t'other old Don, in the grand square?"

"If you please, Sir," cried Cecilia, hastily, "we will talk of this matter another time."

"No, pray," cried young Delvile, who could not forbear laughing, "let it be discussed now."

"Hate 'em," continued Mr. Briggs, "hate

"hate 'em both! one ſpending more than he's worth, cheated and over-reached by fools, running into goal to pleaſe a parcel of knaves: t'other counting nothing but uncles and grandfathers, dealing out fine names inſtead of caſh, caſting up more couſins than guineas——"

Again Cecilia endeavoured to ſilence him, but, only chucking her under the chin, he went on, "Ay, ay, my little duck, never mind 'em; one of them i'n't worth a penny, and t'other has nothing in his pockets but liſts of the defunct. What good will come of that? would not give twopence a dozen for 'em! A poor ſet of grandees, with nothing but a tie-wig for their portions!"

Cecilia, unable to bear this harangue in the preſence of young Delvile, who, however, laughed it off with a very good grace, aroſe with an intention to retreat, which being perceived by Sir Robert Floyer, who had attended to this dialogue with haughty contempt, he came forward, and ſaid, "now then, madam, may I have the honour of your hand?"

"No, Sir," anſwered Cecilia, "I am engaged."

"Engaged again?" cried he, with the air of a man who thought himſelf much injured.

"Glad of it, glad of it!" ſaid Mr. Briggs; "ſerved very right! have nothing to ſay to him, my chick!"

"Why

"Why not, Sir?" cried Sir Robert, with an imperious look.

"Sha'n't have her, sha'n't have her! I can tell you that; won't consent; know you of old."

"And what do you know of me, pray, Sir?"

"No good, no good; nothing to say to you; found fault with my nose! ha'n't forgot it."

At this moment Mr. Marriot came to claim his partner, who, very willing to quit this scene of wrangling and vulgarity, immediately attended him.

Miss Larolles, again flying up to her, said, "O my dear, we are all expiring to know who that creature is! I never saw such a horrid fright in my life!"

Cecilia was beginning to satisfy her, but some more young ladies coming up to join in the request, she endeavoured to pass on: "O but, cried Miss Larolles, detaining her, "do pray stop, for I've something to tell you that's so monstrous you've no idea. Do you know Mr. Meadows has not danced at all! and he's been standing with Mr. Sawyer, and looking on all the time, and whispering and laughing so you've no notion. However, I assure you, I'm excessive glad he did not ask me, for all I have been sitting still all this time, for I had a great deal rather sit still, I assure you: only I'm sorry I put on this dress,

dress, for any thing would have done just to look on in that stupid manner."

Here Mr. Meadows sauntered towards them, and all the young ladies began playing with their fans, and turning their heads another way, to disguise the expectations which his approach awakened; and Miss Larolles, in a hasty whisper to Cecilia, cried, "Pray don't take any notice of what I said, for if he should happen to ask me, I can't well refuse him, you know, for if I do, he'll be so excessive affronted you can't think."

Mr. Meadows then, mixing in the little group, began, with sundry grimaces, to exclaim, "how intolerably hot it is! there's no such thing as breathing. How can any body think of dancing! I am amazed Mr. Harrel has not a ventilator in this room. Don't you think it would be a great improvement?"

This speech, though particularly addressed to no one, received immediately an assenting answer from all the young ladies.

Then, turning to Miss Larolles, "Don't you dance?" he said.

"Me?" cried she, embarrassed, "yes, I believe so,—really I don't know,—I a'n't quite determined."

"O, do dance!" cried he, stretching himself and yawning, "it always gives me spirits to see you."

Then, turning suddenly to Cecilia, without any

any previous ceremony of ſhewing his acquaintance, either by ſpeaking or bowing, he abruptly ſaid, "Do you love dancing, ma'am?"

"Yes, Sir, extremely well."

"I am very glad to hear it. You have one thing, then, to ſoften exiſtence."

"Do you diſlike it yourſelf?"

"What dancing? Oh dreadful! how it was ever adopted in a civilized country, I cannot find out; 'tis certainly a Barbarian exerciſe, and of ſavage origin. Don't you think ſo, Miſs Larolles?"

"Lord no," cried Miſs Larolles, "I aſſure you I like it better than any thing; I know nothing ſo delightful; I declare I dare ſay I could not live without it; I ſhould be ſo ſtupid you can't conceive."

"Why I remember," ſaid Mr. Marriott, "when Mr. Meadows was always dancing himſelf. Have you forgot, Sir, when you uſed to wiſh the night would laſt for ever, that you might dance without ceaſing?"

Mr. Meadows, who was now intently ſurveying a painting that was over the chimney-piece, ſeemed not to hear this queſtion, but preſently called out, "I am amazed Mr. Harrel can ſuffer ſuch a picture as this to be in his houſe. I hate a portrait, 'tis ſo wearisome looking at a thing that is doing nothing!"

"Do

"Do you like historical pictures, Sir, any better?"

"O no, I detest them! views of battles, murders, and death! Shocking! shocking! —I shrink from them with horror!"

"Perhaps you are fond of landscapes?"

"By no means! Green trees and fat cows! what do they tell one? I hate every thing that is insipid."

"Your toleration, then," said Cecilia, "will not be very extensive."

"No," said he, yawning, "one can tolerate nothing! one's patience is wholly exhausted by the total tediousness of every thing one sees, and every body one talks with. Don't you find it so, ma'am?"

"*Sometimes!*" said Cecilia, rather archly.

"You are right, ma'am, extremely right; one does not know what in the world to do with one's self. At home, one is killed with meditation; abroad, one is overpowered by ceremony; no possibility of finding ease or comfort. You never go into public, I think, ma'am?"

"Why not to be much *marked*, I find!" said Cecilia, laughing.

"O, I beg your pardon! I believe I saw you one evening at Almack's: I really beg your pardon, but I had quite forgot it."

"Lord, Mr. Meadows," said Miss Larolles, "don't you know you are meaning

the Pantheon? only conceive, how you forget things!"

"The Pantheon, was it? I never know one of those places from another. I heartily wish they were all abolished. I hate public places. 'Tis terrible to be under the same roof with a set of people who would care nothing if they saw one expiring."

"You are, at least, then, fond of the society of your friends?"

"O no! to be worn out by seeing always the same faces!—one is sick to death of friends; nothing makes one so melancholy."

Cecilia now went to join the dancers, and Mr. Meadows, turning to Miss Larolles, said, "Pray don't let me keep you from dancing; I am afraid you'll lose your place."

"No," cried she, bridling, "I sha'n't dance at all."

"How cruel!" cried he, yawning, "when you know how it exhilarates me to see you! Don't you think this room is very close? I must go and try another atmosphere——But I hope you will relent, and dance?"

And then, stretching his arms as if half asleep, he sauntered into the next room, where he flung himself upon a sofa till the ball was over.

The new partner of Cecilia, who was a wealthy, but very simple young man, used his

his own desire to entertain and oblige her, and, flattered by the warmth of his own desire, he fancied that he succeeded; though, in a state of such suspence and anxiety, a thousand of greater talents had failed.

At the end of the two dances, Lord Ernolf again attempted to engage her for his son; but she now excused herself from dancing any more, and sat quietly as a spectatress till the rest of the company gave over. Mr. Marriot, however, would not quit her, and she was compelled to support with him a trifling conversation, which, though irksome to herself, to him, who had not *seen her in her happier hour*, was delightful.

She expected every instant to be again joined by young Delvile, but the expectation was disappointed; he came not; she concluded he was in another apartment; the company was summoned to supper, she then thought it impossible to miss him; but, after waiting and looking for him in vain, she found he had already left the house.

The rest of the evening she scarce knew what passed, for she attended to nothing; Mr. Monckton might watch, and Mr. Briggs might exhort her, Sir Robert might display his insolence, or Mr. Marriot his gallantry, —all was equally indifferent, and equally unheeded, and before half the company left the house, she retired to her own room.

She spent the night in the utmost distur-

bance; the occurrences of the evening with respect to young Delvile she looked upon as decisive: if his absence had chagrined her, his presence had still more shocked her, since, while she was left to conjecture, though she had fears she had hopes, and though all she saw was gloomy, all she expected was pleasant; but they had now met, and those expectations proved fallacious. She knew not, indeed, how to account for the strangeness of his conduct; but in seeing it was strange, she was convinced it was unfavourable: he had evidently avoided her while it was in his power, and when, at last, he was obliged to meet her, he was formal, distant, and reserved.

The more she recollected and dwelt upon the difference of his behaviour in their preceding meeting, the more angry as well as amazed she became at the change, and though she still concluded the pursuit of some other object occasioned it, she could find no excuse for his fickleness, if that pursuit was recent, nor for his caprice, if it was anterior.

CHAP. VIII.

A BROAD HINT.

THE next day Cecilia, to drive Delvile a little from her thoughts, which she now no longer wished him to occupy, again made a visit to Miss Belfield, whose society afforded her more consolation than any other she could procure.

She found her employed in packing up, and preparing to remove to another lodging, for her brother, she said, was so much better, that he did not think it right to continue in so disgraceful a situation.

She talked with her accustomed openness of her affairs, and the interest which Cecilia involuntarily took in them, contributed to relieve her vexation in thinking of her own.

"The generous friend of my brother," said she, "who, though but a new acquaintance to him, has courted him in all his sorrows, when every body else forsook him, has brought him at last into a better way of thinking. He says there is a gentleman whose son is soon going abroad, who he is almost sure will like my brother vastly, and in another week, he is to be introduced to him. And so, if my mother can but recon-

cile herself to parting with him, perhaps we may all do well again!

"Your mother," said Cecilia, "when he is gone, will better know the value of the blessing she has left in her daughter."

"O no, madam, no; she is wrapt up in him, and cares nothing for all the world besides. It was always so, and we have all of us been used to it. But we have had a sad scene since you were so kind to come last, for when she told him what you had done, he was almost out of his senses with anger that we had acquainted you with his distress, and he said it was publishing his misery, and undoing whatever his friends or himself could do, for it was making him ashamed to appear in the world, even when his affairs might be better. But I told him again and again that you had as much sweetness as goodness, and instead of hurting his reputation, would do him nothing but credit."

"I am sorry," said Cecilia, "Mrs. Belfield mentioned the circumstance at all; it would have been better, for many reasons, that he should not have heard of it."

"She hoped it would please him," answered Miss Belfield; "however, he made us both promise we would take no such steps in future, for he said we were not reduced to so much indigence, whatever he was; and that as to our accepting money from other people, that we might have support our own for

him,

him, it would be answering no purpose, for he should think himself a monster to make use of it."

"And what said your mother?"

"Why she gave him a great many promises that she would never vex him about it again, and indeed, much as I know we are obliged to you, madam, and gratefully as I am sure I would lay down my life to serve you, I am very glad in this case that my brother has found it out. For though I so much wish him to do something for himself, and not to be so proud, and live in a manner he has no right to do, I think, for all that, that it is a great disgrace to my poor father's honest memory, to have us turn beggars after his death, when he left us all so well provided for, if he had but known how to be satisfied."

"There is a natural rectitude in your heart," said Cecilia, "that the ablest casuists could not mend."

She then enquired whither they were removing, and Miss Belfield told her to Portland-Street, Oxford-Road, where they were to have two apartments up two pair of stairs, and the use of a very good parlour, in which her brother might see his friends. "And this, added she, "is a luxury for which nobody can blame him, because if he has not the appearance of a decent home, no gentleman will employ him."

The Paddington house, she said, was already let; and her mother was determined not to hire another, but still to live as penuriously as possible, in order, notwithstanding his remonstrances, to save all she could of her income for her son.

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Belfield, who very familiarly said she came to tell Cecilia they were *all in the wrong box* in letting her son know of the 10*l.* bank note, "for," continued she, "he has a pride that would grace a duke, and he thinks nothing of his hardships, so long as nobody knows of them. So another time we must manage things better, and when we do him any good, not let him know a word of the matter. We'll settle it all among ourselves, and one day or other he'll be glad enough to thank us."

Cecilia, who saw Mrs Belfield colour with shame at the freedom of this hint, now arose to depart: but Mrs. Belfield begged her not to go so soon, and pressed her with such urgency to again sit down, that she was obliged to comply.

She then began a warm commendation of her son, lavishly praising all his good qualities, and exalting even his defects, concluding with saying, "But, ma'am, for all he's such a complete gentleman, and for all he's made so much of, he was so diffident, I could not get him to call and thank you for

the preſent journey him, though when he went his laſt airing I almoſt knelt to him to do it. But, with all his merit, he wants as much encouragement as a lady, for I can tell you it is not a little will do for him."

Cecilia, amazed at this extraordinary ſpeech, looked from the mother to the daughter in order to diſcover its meaning, which, however, was ſoon rendered plainer by what followed.

"But pray now, ma'am, don't think him the more ungrateful for his ſhyneſs, for young ladies ſo high in the world as you are, muſt go pretty good lengths before a young man will get courage to ſpeak to them. And though I have told my ſon over and over, that the ladies never like a man the worſe for being a little bold, he's ſo much down in the mouth that it has no effect upon him. But it all comes of his being brought up at the University, for that makes him think he knows better than I can tell him. And ſo, to be ſure, he does. However, for all that, it is a hard thing upon a mother to find all ſhe ſays goes juſt for nothing. But I hope you'll excuſe him, ma'am, for its nothing in the world but his over modeſty."

Cecilia now ſtared with a look of ſo much aſtoniſhment and diſpleaſure, that Mrs. Belfield, ſuſpecting ſhe had gone rather too far, added, "I beg you won't take what I've ſaid amiſs, ma'am, for we mothers of families are

more afraid to speak out than modesty dictates. And I should not have cried so much, but only I was afraid you would misconstrue my son's backwardness, and so that he might be flung out of your favour at last, and all for nothing but having too much respect for you."

"O dear mother!" cried Miss Belfield, whose face was the colour of scarlet, "pray!"——

"What's the matter now?" cried Mrs. Belfield; "you are as shy as your brother, and if we are all to be so, when are we to come to an understanding?"

"Not immediately, I believe, indeed," said Cecilia, rising, "but that we may not plunge deeper in our mistakes, I will for the present take my leave."

"No, ma'am," cried Mrs. Belfield, stopping her, "pray don't go yet, for I've got a great many things I want to talk to you about. In the first place, ma'am, pray what is your opinion of this scheme for sending my son abroad into foreign parts? I don't know what you may think of it, but as to me, it half drives me out of my senses to have him taken away from me at last in that unnatural manner. And I'm sure, ma'am, if you would only put in a word against it, I dare say he would give it up without a demur."

"Me!" cried Cecilia, disengaging herself from her hold, "No, madam, you must

apply

apply to those friends who better understand his affairs, and who would have a deeper interest in obtaining him."

"Lack-a-day!" cried Mrs. Belfield, with darkly suppressed vexation, "how hard it is to make those grand young ladies come to reason! As to my son's other friends, what good will it do for him to mind what they say? who can expect him to give up his journey, without knowing what amends he shall get for it?"

"You must settle this matter with him at your leisure," said Cecilia, "I cannot now stay another moment."

Mrs. Belfield, again finding she had been too precipitate, tried to draw back, saying, "Pray, ma'am, don't let what I have mentioned go against my son in your good opinion, for he knows no more of it than the farthest person in the world, as my daughter can testify: for as to shyness, he's just as shy as a lady himself; so what good he ever got at the University, as to the matter of making his fortune, it's what I never could discover. However, I dare say he knows best; though when all comes to all, if I was to speak my mind, I think he's made but a poor hand of it."

Cecilia, who only through compassion to the blushing Henrietta forbore repressing this forwardness more seriously, merely answered Mrs. Belfield by wishing her good

morning: but, while she was taking a kinder leave of her timid daughter, the mother added, "As to the present, ma'am, you was so kind to make us, Henny can witness for me every penny of it shall go to my son."

"I rather meant it," said Cecilia, "for your daughter; but if it is of use to any body, my purpose is sufficiently answered."

Mrs. Belfield again pressed her to sit down, but she would not again listen to her, coldly saying, "I am sorry you troubled Mr. Belfield with any mention of what passed between his sister and me, but should you speak of it again, I beg you will explain to him that he had no concern in that little transaction, which belonged wholly to ourselves."

She then hastened down stairs, followed, however, by Mrs. Belfield, making awkward excuses for what she had said, intermixed with frequent hints that she knew all the time she was in the right.

This little incident, which convinced Cecilia, Mrs. Belfield was firmly persuaded she was in love with her son, gave her much uneasiness; she feared the son himself might entertain the same notion, and thought it most probable the daughter also had imbibed it, though but for the forward vulgarity of the sanguine mother, their opinions might long have remained concealed. Her benevolence towards them, notwithstanding its *purity*, must now therefore cease to be exerted;

erved, nor could she even visit Miss Belfield, since prudence, and a regard for her own character, seemed immediately to prohibit all commerce with the family.

"And thus difficult," cried she, "is the blameless use of riches, though all who want them, think nothing so easy as their disposal! This family I have so much wished to serve, I may at last only have injured, since the disappointment of their higher expectations, may render all smaller benefits contemptible. And thus this unfortunate misconstruction of my good offices, robs them of a useful assistant, and deprives me at the same time of an amiable companion."

As soon as she returned home, she had a letter put into her hand which came from Mr. Marriot, whose servant had twice called for an answer in the short time she had been absent.

This letter contained a most passionate avowal of the impression she had made on his heart the preceding evening, and an angry complaint that Mr. Harrel had refused to hear his proposals. He entreated her permission to wait upon her for only five minutes, and concluded with the most fervent professions of respect and admiration.

The precipitancy of this declaration served merely to confirm the opinion she had already conceived of the weakness of his understanding; but the obstinacy of Mr. Harrel irritated

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and different from thought many of expostulating with so hopeless a subject, whom neither reason nor gratitude could turn from his own purposes, she was obliged to submit to his management, and was well convinced, in the present instance, to affirm his desires. She therefore wrote a concise answer to her new admirer, in the usual form of civil rejection.

CHAP. IX.

AN ACCOMMODATION.

CECILIA was informed the next morning that a young woman begged to speak with her, and upon sending for her up stairs, she saw, to her great surprise, Miss Belfield.

She came in fear and trembling, sent, she said, by her mother, to entreat her pardon for what had passed the preceding day. "But I know, madam," she added, "you cannot pardon it, and therefore all that I mean to do is to clear my brother from any share in what was said, for indeed he has too much sense to harbour any such presumption, and to thank *you* with a most grateful heart for all the *goodness* you have shewn us."

And

[illegible] modestly mortifying, [illegible] have returned home; but Cecilia, much touched by her gentleness, took her hand, and kindly reviving her by assurances of esteem, entreated that she would lengthen her stay.

"How good is this, madam," said she, "after having so much reason to think so ill of me and of all of us! I tried all in my power to undeceive my mother, or at least to keep her quiet; but she was so much persuaded she was right, that she never would listen to me, and always said, did I suppose it was for *me* you condescended to come so often?"

"Yes," answered Cecilia, "most undoubtedly; had I not known you, however well I might have wished your brother, I should certainly not have visited at his house. But I am very happy to hear the mistake had spread no further."

"No indeed, madam, I never once thought of it; and as to my brother, when my mother only hinted it to him, he was quite angry. But though I don't mean to vindicate what has happened, you will not, I hope, be displeased if I say my mother is much more pardonable than she seems to be, for the same mistake she made with you, she would have been as apt to have made with a princess; it was not, therefore, from any want of respect, but merely from thinking

my

my brother might marry as high as he pleased, and believed no lady would refuse him, if he would but have the courage to speak.

Cecilia assured her she would think no more of the error, but told her that to avoid its renewal, she must decline calling upon her again till her brother was gone. She begged therefore to see her in Portman-Square whenever she had leisure, repeatedly assuring her of her good opinion and regard, and of the pleasure with which she should seize every opportunity of shewing them.

Delighted by a reception so kind, Miss Belfield remained with her all the morning; and when at last she was obliged to leave her, she was but too happy in being solicited to repeat her visit.

She suffered one day only to elapse before she shewed her readiness to accept the friendship that was offered her; and Cecilia, much pleased by this eagerness, redoubled her efforts to oblige and to serve her.

From this time, hardly a day passed in which she did not call in Portman-Square, where nothing in her reception was omitted that could contribute to her contentment. Cecilia was glad to employ her mind in any way that related not to Delvile, whom she now earnestly endeavoured to think of no more, denying herself even the pleasure of talking of him with Miss Belfield, by the name of *her brother's noble friend*.

During

During this time she devised various methods, all too delicate to give even the shadow of offence, for making both useful and ornamental presents to her new favourite, with whom she grew daily more satisfied, and to whom she purposed hereafter offering a residence in her own house.

The trial of intimacy, so difficult to the ablest to stand, and from which even the most faultless are so rarely acquitted, Miss Belfield sustained with honour. Cecilia found her artless, ingenuous, and affectionate; her understanding was good, though no pains had been taken to improve it; her disposition though ardent was soft, and her mind seemed informed by intuitive integrity.

She communicated to Cecilia all the affairs of her family, disguising from her neither distress nor meanness, and seeking to palliate nothing but the grosser parts of the character of her mother. She seemed equally ready to make known to her even the most chosen secrets of her own bosom, for that such she had was evident, from a frequent appearance of absence and uneasiness which she took but little trouble to conceal. Cecilia, however, trusted not herself, in the present critical situation of her own mind, with any enquiries that might lead to a subject she was conscious she ought not to dwell upon: a short time, she hoped, would totally remove her suspence; but as she had much less reason to

expect

expected than exile. She made it her immediate study to prepare for the worst, and therefore carefully avoided all disturbance, by nourishing her tenderness, which would unman her resolution.

While thus, in friendly conversation, and virtuous forbearance, passed gravely, but not unhappily, the time of Cecilia, the rest of the house was very differently employed: feasting, revelling, amusements of all sorts were pursued with more eagerness than ever; and the alarm which so lately threatened their destruction, seemed now merely to heighten the avidity with which they were sought. Yet never was the diffusion of happiness and diversion more striking and obvious. Mrs. Harrel, in spite of his natural levity, was sometimes struck from time to time with fits of horror that embittered his gayest moments, and cast a cloud upon all his enjoyments. Always an enemy to solitude, he now found it doubly insupportable, and ran into company for ever, less from a hope of finding entertainment, than from a dread of spending half an hour by himself.

Cecilia, who saw that his capacity for pleasure increased with his uneasiness, once more ventured to speak with him upon the subject of reformation, counselling him to take advantage of his present ill-humour, which seemed at least to promise a sensibility of his situation, in order to point out

to him the necessity of an immediate inspection into his affairs, which, with a total change in his way of life, was his only chance for snatching him from the dismal despondency into which he was sinking.

Mrs. Harrel declared herself unequal to following this advice, and said that her whole study was to find Mr. Harrel amusement, for he was grown so ill-humoured and peevish she quite feared being alone with him.

The house therefore now was more crowded than ever, and nothing but dissipation was thought of. Among those who upon this plan were courted to it, the foremost was Mr. Morrice, who, from a peculiar talent of uniting festivity of conduct with gaiety of speech, made himself at once so agreeable and useful in the family, that in a short time they fancied it impossible to live without him. And Morrice, though his first view in obtaining admittance had been the cultivation of his acquaintance with Cecilia, was upon reflection satisfied with the turn characters had taken, since his utmost vanity had given him to entertain any matrimonial hopes with her, and he thought his fortune as likely to result from the civility of her friends as of herself. For Morrice, however flighty and wild, had always, as soon as the study of his own interest began, and though from a giddy forwardness of disposition he often gave offence, his

his meaning and his ſerious attention was not the leſs directed to the advancement of her own affairs; he formed no connexion from which he hoped not ſome benefit, and he conſidered the acquaintance and friendſhip of his ſuperiors in no other light than that of procuring him ſooner or later recommendation to new clients.

Sir Robert Floyer was alſo more frequent than ever in his viſits, and Mr. Harrel, notwithſtanding the remonſtrances of Cecilia, contrived every poſſible opportunity of giving him acceſs to her. Mrs. Harrel herſelf, tho' hitherto neutral, now pleaded his cauſe with earneſtneſs; and Mr. Arnott, who had been her former refuge from this perſecution, grew ſo ſerious and ſo tender in his devoirs, that, unable any longer to doubt the ſentiments ſhe had inſpired, ſhe was compelled even with him to be guarded and diſtant.

She now with daily concern looked back to the ſacrifice ſhe had made to the worthleſs and ungrateful Mr. Harrel, and was ſometimes tempted to immediately chuſe another guardian, and leave his houſe for ever: yet the delicacy of her diſpoſition was averſe to any ſtep that might publicly expoſe him, and her early regard for his wife would not ſuffer her to put it in execution.

Theſe circumſtances contributed greatly to encreaſe her intimacy with Miſs Belfield; ſhe now never ſaw Mrs. Delviſe, whom alone

ſhe

ſhe preferred to her, and from the troubleſome aſſiduity of Sir Robert, ſcarce ever met Mr. Monckton but in his preſence: ſhe found, therefore, no reſource againſt teazing and vexation, but what was afforded her by the converſation of the amiable Henrietta.

CHAP. X.

A DETECTION.

A Fortnight had now elapſed in which Cecilia had had no ſort of communication with the Delviles, whom equally from pride and from prudence ſhe forbore to ſeek herſelf, when one morning, while Miſs Belfield was ſitting with her, ſhe was told by her maid that young Mr. Delvile was in the drawing-room, and begged the honour of ſeeing her for a few moments.

Cecilia, though ſhe ſtarted and changed colour with ſurpriſe at this meſſage, was unconſcious ſhe did either, from the yet greater ſurpriſe ſhe received by the behaviour of Miſs Belfield, who haſtily ariſing exclaimed

"Good God, Mr. Delvile! —— do you know

"Mr. Delville, madam?—does Mr. Delville visit at this house?"

"Sometimes, not often," answered Cecilia; "but why?"

"I don't know,—nothing, madam,—I only asked by accident, I believe—but it's very—it's extremely—I did not know——" and colouring violently, she again sat down.

An apprehension the most painful now took possession of Cecilia, and, absorbed in thought, she continued for some minutes silent and immoveable.

From this state she was awakened by her maid, who asked if she chose to have her gloves.

Cecilia, taking them from her without speaking, left the room, and not daring to stop for enquiry or consideration, hastened down stairs; but when she entered the apartment where young Delville was waiting for her, all utterance seemed denied her, and she courtsied without saying a word.

Struck with the look and uncommon manner of her entrance, he became in a moment as much disturbed as herself, pouring forth a thousand unnecessary and embarrassed apologies for his visit, and so totally forgetting even the reason why he made it, that he had taken his leave, and was departing before he recollected it. He then turned back, forcing a laugh at his own absence of mind, and told her

her he had only called to enquire her, that the commands with which ſhe had honoured him were now obeyed, and, he hoped, to her ſatisfaction.

Cecilia, who knew not ſhe had ever given him any, waited his farther explanation; and he then informed her he had that very morning introduced Mr. Belfield to the Earl of Vannels, who had already heard him very advantageouſly ſpoken of by ſome gentlemen to whom he had been known at the Univerſity, and who was ſo much pleaſed with him upon this firſt interview, that he meant, after a few enquiries, which could not but turn out to his credit, to commit his eldeſt ſon to his truſt in making the tour of Europe.

Cecilia thanked him for her ſhare in the trouble he had taken in this tranſaction; and then aſked if Mrs. Delvile continued well.

"Yes," anſwered he with a ſmile half reproachful, "as well as one who having ever hoped your favour, can eaſily be after finding that hope diſappointed. But much as ſhe has taught her ſon, there is one leſſon ſhe might perhaps learn from him;—to fly, not ſeek, thoſe dangerous indulgencies of which the deprivation is the loſs of peace!"

He then bowed, and made his exit.

This unexpected reproof, and the yet more unexpected compliment that accompanied it, in both which *more ſeemed meant than met the ear*,

ear, encreaſed the perturbation into which Cecilia had already been thrown. It occurred to her that under the ſanction of his mother's name, he had taken an opportunity of making an apology for his own conduct; yet why avoiding her ſociety, if to that he alluded, ſhould be *flying a dangerous indulgence*, ſhe could not underſtand, ſince he had ſo little reaſon to fear any repulſe in continuing to ſeek it.

Sorry, however, for the abrupt manner in which ſhe had left Miſs Belfield, ſhe loſt not a moment in haſtening back to her; but when ſhe came into the room, ſhe found her employed in looking out of the window, her eye following ſome object with ſuch earneſtneſs of attention, that ſhe perceived not her return.

Cecilia, who could not doubt the motive of her curioſity, had no great difficulty in forbearing to offer her any interruption. She drew her head back in a few minutes, and caſting it upwards, with her hands claſped, ſoftly whiſpered, "Heaven ever ſhield and bleſs him! and O may he never feel ſuch pain as I do!"

She then again looked out, but ſoon drawing herſelf in, ſaid, in the ſame ſoft accents, "Oh, why art thou gone! ſweeteſt and nobleſt of men! why might I not ſee thee longer, when, under heaven, there is no other bleſſing I wiſh for!"

A ſigh

A ſigh which at theſe words eſcaped Cecilia made her ſtart and turn towards the door; the deepeſt bluſhes overſpread the cheeks of both as their eyes met each other, and while Miſs Belfield trembled in every limb at the diſcovery ſhe had made, Cecilia herſelf was hardly able to ſtand.

A painful and moſt embarraſſed ſilence ſucceeded, which was only broken by Miſs Belfield's burſting into tears.

Cecilia, extremely moved, forgot for a moment her own intereſt in what was paſſing, and tenderly approaching, embraced her with the utmoſt kindneſs: but ſtill ſhe ſpoke not, fearing to make any enquiry, from dreading to hear any explanation.

Miſs Belfield, ſoothed by her ſoftneſs, clung about her, and hiding her face in her arms, ſobbed out, "Ah, madam! who ought to be unhappy if befriended by you! if I could help it, I would love nobody elſe in almoſt the whole world. But you muſt let me leave you now, and to-morrow I will tell you every thing."

Cecilia, who had no wiſh for making any oppoſition, embraced her again, and ſuffered her quietly to depart.

Her own mind was now in a ſtate of the utmoſt confuſion. The rectitude of her heart and the ſoundneſs of her judgment had hitherto guarded her both from error and blame, and, except during her recent ſuſ-

penſe, had preſerved her tranquillity inviolate; but her commerce with the world had been ſmall and confined, and her actions had had little reference but to herſelf. The caſe was now altered; and ſhe was ſuddenly in a conjuncture of all others the moſt delicate, that of accidentally diſcovering a rival in a favourite friend.

The fondneſs ſhe had conceived for Miſs Belfield, and the ſincerity of her intentions as well as promiſes to ſerve her, made the detection of this ſecret peculiarly cruel: ſhe had lately felt no pleaſure but in her ſociety, and looked forward to much future comfort from the continuance of her regard, and from their conſtantly living together; but now this was no longer even to be deſired, ſince the utter annihilation of the wiſhes of both, by young Delvile's being diſpoſed of to a third perſon, could alone render eligible their dwelling under the ſame roof.

Her pity, however, for Miſs Belfield, was almoſt wholly unallayed by jealouſy; ſhe harboured not any ſuſpicion that ſhe was loved by young Delvile, whoſe aſpiring ſpirit led her infinitely more to fear ſome higher rival, than to believe he beſtowed even a thought upon the poor Henrietta: but ſtill ſhe wiſhed with the utmoſt ardour to know the length of their acquaintance, how often they had met, when they had converſed, what

notice

notice he had taken of her, and how ſo dangerous a preference had invaded her heart.

But though this curioſity was both natural and powerful, her principal concern was the arrangement of her own conduct: the next day Miſs Belfield was to tell her every thing by a voluntary promiſe; but ſhe doubted if ſhe had any right to accept ſuch a confidence. Miſs Belfield, ſhe was ſure, knew not ſhe was intereſted in the tale, ſince ſhe had not even imagined that Delvile was known to her. She might hope, therefore, not only for advice but aſſiſtance, and fancy that while ſhe repoſed her ſecret in the boſom of a friend, ſhe ſecured herſelf her beſt offices and beſt wiſhes for ever.

Would ſhe obtain them? no; the moſt romantic generoſity would revolt from ſuch a demand, for however precarious was her own chance with young Delvile, Miſs Belfield ſhe was ſure could not have any: neither her birth nor education fitted her for his rank in life, and even were both unexceptionable, the ſmalleſs of her fortune, as Mr. Monckton had inſtructed her, would be an obſtacle inſurmountable.

Would it not be a kind of treachery to gather from her every thing, yet aid her nothing? to take advantage of her unſuſpicious openneſs, in order to learn all that related to one whom ſhe yet hoped would long ultimately to herſelf, and gratify an

teneſted curioſity at the expence of a candour not more ſimple than amiable?" "No," cried Cecilia, "arts that I could never forgive, I never will practice; this ſweet but unhappy girl ſhall tell me nothing: betrayed already by the tenderneſs of her own heart, ſhe ſhall at leaſt ſuffer no farther from any duplicity in mine. If, indeed, Mr. Delvile, as I ſuſpect, is engaged elſewhere, I will make this gentle Henrietta the object of my future ſolicitude; the ſympathy of our ſituations will not then divide but unite us, and I will take her to my boſom, hear all her ſorrows, and calm her troubled ſpirit by participating in her ſenſibility. But if, on the contrary, this myſtery ends more happily for myſelf, if Mr. Delvile has now no other engagement, and hereafter clears his conduct to my ſatisfaction, I will not be acceſſary to loading her future recollection with the ſhame of a confidence ſhe then cannot but repent, nor with an injury to her delicacy that may wound it for ever."

"She determined, therefore, carefully to avoid the ſubject for the preſent, ſince ſhe could offer no advice for which ſhe might not, hereafter, be ſuſpected of ſelfiſh motives; but yet, from a real regard to the tender-hearted girl, to give all the tacit diſcouragement that was in her power, to a paſſion which ſhe firmly believed would be productive of nothing but miſery.

Once,

Once, from the frankneſs natural to her diſpoſition, ſhe thought not merely of receiving, but returning her confidence: her better judgment, however, ſoon led her from ſo hazardous a plan, which could only have expoſed them both to a romantic humiliation, by which, in the end, their mutual expectations might prove ſources of mutual diſtruſt.

When Miſs Belfield, therefore, the next morning, her air unuſually timid, and her whole face covered with bluſhes, made her viſit, Cecilia, not ſeeming to notice her confuſion, told her ſhe was very ſorry ſhe was obliged to go out herſelf, and contrived, under various pretences, to keep her maid in the room. Miſs Belfield, ſuppoſing this to be accidental, rejoiced in her imaginary reprieve, and ſoon recovered her uſual chearfulneſs: and Cecilia, who really meant to call upon Mrs. Delvile, borrowed Mrs. Harrel's carriage, and ſet down her artleſs young friend at her new lodgings in Portland-Street, before ſhe proceeded to St. James's-Square, talking the whole time upon matters of utter indifference.

CHAP. XI.

A SARCASM.

THE reproach which Cecilia had received from young Delvile in the name of his mother, determined her upon making this visit; for though, in her present uncertainty, she wished only to see that family when sought by themselves, she was yet desirous to avoid all appearance of singularity, lest any suspicions should be raised of her sentiments.

Mrs. Delvile received her with a cold civility that chilled and afflicted her: she found her seriously offended by her long absence, and now for the first time perceived that haughtiness of character which hitherto she had thought only given to her by the calumny of envy; for though her displeasure was undisguised, she deigned not to make any reproaches, evidently shewing that her disappointment in the loss of her society, was embittered by a proud regret for the kindness she believed she had thrown away. But though she scrupulously forbore the smallest complaint, she failed not from time to time

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to caſt out reflections upon fickleneſs and caprice the moſt ſatirical and pointed.

Cecilia, who could not poſſibly avow the motives of her behaviour, ventured not to offer any apology for her apparent negligence; but, hitherto accuſtomed to the moſt diſtinguiſhed kindneſs, a change to ſo much bitterneſs, ſhocked and overpowered her, and ſhe ſat almoſt wholly ſilent, and hardly able to look up.

Lady Honoria Pemberton, a daughter of the Duke of Derwent, now came into the room, and afforded her ſome relief by the ſprightlineſs of her converſation. This young lady, who was a relation of the Delviles, and of a character the moſt airy and unthinking, ran on during her whole viſit in a vein of faſhionable ſcandal, with a levity that the cenſures of Mrs. Delvile, though by no means ſpared, had no power to controul: and after having completely ranſacked the topics of the day, ſhe turned ſuddenly to Cecilia, with whom during her reſidence in St. James's-Square ſhe had made ſome acquaintance, and ſaid, "So I hear, Miſs Beverley, that after half the town has given you to Sir Robert Floyer, and the other half to my Lord Derford, you intend, without regarding one ſide or the other, to diſappoint them both, and give yourſelf to Mr. Marriot."

"Me? no, indeed," anſwered Cecilia,

"your ladyſhip has been much miſinformed."

"I hope ſo," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "for Mr. Marriot, by all I ever heard of him, ſeems to have but one recommendation, and that the laſt Miſs Beverley ought to value, a good eſtate."

Cecilia, ſecretly delighted by a ſpeech which ſhe could not reſiſt flattering herſelf had reference to her ſon, now a little revived, and endeavoured to bear ſome part in the converſation.

"Every body one meets," cried Lady Honoria, "diſpoſes of Miſs Beverley to ſome new perſon; yet the common opinion is that Sir Robert Floyer will be the man. But upon my word, for my own part, I cannot conjecture how ſhe will manage among them, for Mr. Marriot declares he's determined he won't be refuſed, and Sir Robert vows that he'll never give her up. So we none of us know how it will end; but I am vaſtly glad ſhe keeps them ſo long in ſuſpenſe."

"If there is any ſuſpenſe," ſaid Cecilia, "I am at leaſt ſure it muſt be wilful. But why ſhould your ladyſhip rejoice in it?"

"O, becauſe it helps to torment them, and keeps ſomething going forward. Beſides, we are all looking in the news-papers every day, to ſee when they'll fight another *duel* for you."

"Ano-

"Another?" cried Cecilia; "indeed they have never yet fought any for me."

"O, I beg your pardon," anſwered her ladyſhip, "Sir Robert, you know, fought one for you in the beginning of the winter, with that Iriſh fortune-hunter who affronted you at the Opera."

"Iriſh fortune-hunter?" repeated Cecilia, "how ſtrangely has that quarrel been miſrepreſented! In the firſt place, I never was affronted at the Opera at all, and in the ſecond, if your Ladyſhip means Mr. Belfield, I queſtion if ever he was in Ireland in his life."

"Well," cried Lady Honoria, "he might come from Scotland, for ought I know, but ſomewhere he certainly came from; and they tell me he is wounded terribly, and Sir Robert has had all his things packed up this month, that in caſe he ſhould die, he may go abroad in a moment."

"And pray where, Lady Honoria," cried Mrs. Delvile, "do you contrive to pick up all this rattle?"

"O, I don't know; every body tells me ſomething, ſo I put it all together as well as I can. But I could acquaint you with a ſtranger piece of news than any you have heard yet."

"And what is that?"

"O, if I let you know it, you'll tell your ſon."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Delvile laughing, "I shall probably forget it myself."

She then made some further difficulty, and Cecilia, uncertain if she was meant to be a party in the communication, strolled to a window; where, however, as Lady Honoria did not lower her voice, she heard her say "Why you must know I am told he keeps a mistress somewhere in Oxford-Road. They say she's mighty pretty; I should like vastly to see her."

"The consternation of Cecilia at this intelligence would certainly have betrayed all she so much wished to conceal, had not her fortunate removal to the window guarded her from observation. She kept her post, fearing to look round, but was much pleased when Mrs. Delvile, with great indignation answered, "I am sorry, Lady Honoria, you can find any amusement in listening to such idle scandal, which those who tell will never respect you for hearing. In times less daring in slander, the character of Mortimer would have proved to him a shield from all injurious aspersions; yet who shall wonder he could not escape, and who shall contemn the inventors of calumny, if Lady Honoria Pemberton condescends to be entertained with it?"

"Dear Mrs. Delvile," cried Lady Honoria, giddily, "you take me too seriously."

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"And dear Lady Honoria," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "I would it were poſſible to make you take yourſelf ſeriouſly; for could you once ſee with clearneſs and preciſion how much you lower your own dignity, while you ſtoop to depreciate that of others, the very ſubjects that now make your diverſion, would then, far more properly, move your reſentment."

"Ay but, dear madam," cried Lady Honoria, "if that were the caſe, I ſhould be quite perfect, and then you and I ſhould never quarrel, and I don't know what we ſhould do for converſation."

And with theſe words, haſtily ſhaking hands with her, ſhe took leave.

"Such converſation," ſaid Mrs. Delvile when ſhe was gone, "as reſults from the mixture of fruitleſs admonition with incorrigible levity, would be indeed *more honoured in the breach than the obſervance.* But levity is ſo much the faſhionable characteriſtic of the preſent age, that a gay young girl who, like Lady Honoria Pemberton, rules the friends by whom ſhe ought to be ruled, had little chance of eſcaping it."

"She ſeems ſo open, however, to reproof," ſaid Cecilia, "that I ſhould hope in a ſhort time ſhe may alſo be open to conviction."

"No," anſwered Mrs. Delvile, "I have no hope of her at all. I once took much

pains with her; but I soon found that the easiness with which she hears of her faults, is only another effect of the levity with which she commits them. But if the young are never tired of erring in conduct, neither are the older in erring in judgment; the fallibility of *mine* I have indeed very lately experienced."

Cecilia, who strongly felt the poignancy of this sarcasm, and whose constant and unaffected value of Mrs. Delvile by no means deserved it, was again silenced, and again most cruelly depressed: nor could she secretly forbear repining that at the very moment she found herself threatened with a necessity of foregoing the society of her new favourite, Miss Belfield, the woman in the whole world whom she most wished to have for her friend, from an unhappy mistake was ready to relinquish her. Grieved to be thus fallen in her esteem, and shocked that she could offer no justification, after a short and thoughtful pause, she gravely arose to take leave.

Mrs. Delvile then told her that if she had any business to transact with Mr. Delvile, she advised her to acquaint him with it soon, as the whole family left town in a few days.

This was a new and severe blow to Cecilia, who sorrowfully repeated, "In a few days, madam?"

"Yes,"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Delvile; "I hope you intend to be much concerned."

"Ah, madam!" cried Cecilia, who could no longer preserve her quietness, "if you knew but half the respect I bear you, but half the sincerity with which I value and revere you, all protestations would be useless, for all accusations would be over!"

Mrs. Delvile, at once surprised and softened by the warmth of this declaration, instantly took her hand, and said, "They shall now, and for ever be over, if it pains you to hear them. I concluded that what I said would be a matter of indifference to you, or all my displeasure would immediately have been satisfied, when once I had intimated that your absence had excited it."

"That I have excited it at all," answered Cecilia, "gives me indeed the severest uneasiness; but believe me, madam, however unfortunately appearances may be against me, I have always had the highest sense of the kindness with which you have honoured me; and never has there been the smallest abatement in the veneration, gratitude and affection I have inviolably borne you."

"You see, then," said Mrs. Delvile, with a smile, "that where reproof takes any effect, it is not received with that easiness you were just now admiring: on the contrary, where a concession is made without pain, it is also made without meaning, for it is not

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is human nature to project any amendment without a ſecret repugnance. What here, however, you ſhould differ from Lady Honoria Pemberton, who can wonder, when you are ſuperior to all compariſon with her in every thing?"

"Will you then," ſaid Cecilia, "accept my apology, and forgive me?"

"I will do more," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, laughing, "I will forgive you *without* an apology; for the truth is I have heard none! But come," continued ſhe, perceiving Cecilia much abaſhed by this comment, "I will enquire no more about the matter; I am glad to receive my young friend again, and even half aſhamed, deſerving as ſhe is, to ſay *how* glad!"

She then embraced her affectionately, and owned ſhe had been more mortified by her fancied deſertion than ſhe had been willing to own even to herſelf, repeatedly aſſuring her that for many years ſhe had not made any acquaintance ſhe ſo much wiſhed to cultivate, nor enjoyed any ſociety from which ſhe had derived ſo much pleaſure.

Cecilia, whoſe eyes gliſtened with modeſt joy, while her heart beat quick with revived expectation, in liſtening to an effuſion of praiſe ſo infinitely grateful to her, found little difficulty in returning her friendly profeſſions, and, in a few minutes, was not merely

merely reconciled, but more firmly united with her than ever.

Mrs. Delvile inſiſted upon keeping her to dinner, and Cecilia, but too happy in her earneſtneſs, readily agreed to ſend Mrs. Harrel an excuſe.

Neither of the Mr. Delviles ſpent the day at home, and nothing, therefore, diſturbed or interrupted thoſe glowing and delightful ſenſations which ſpring from a cordial renewal of friendſhip and kindneſs. The report, indeed, of Lady Honoria Pemberton gave her ſome uneaſineſs; yet the ſlighty character of that lady, and Mrs. Delvile's reply to it, ſoon made her drive it from her mind.

She returned home early in the evening, as other company was expected, and ſhe had not changed her dreſs ſince the morning; but ſhe firſt made a promiſe to ſee Mrs. Delvile ſome part of every day during the ſhort time that ſhe meant to remain in town.

CHAP.

A SURMISE.

THE next morning opened with another scene; Mrs. Harrel ran into Cecilia's room before breakfast, and acquainted her that Mr. Harrel had not been at home all night.

The consternation with which she heard this account she instantly endeavoured to dissipate, in order to soften the apprehension with which it was communicated: Mrs. Harrel, however, was extremely uneasy, and sent all the town over to make enquiries, but without receiving any intelligence.

Cecilia, unwilling to leave her in a state of such alarm, wrote an excuse to Mrs. Delvile, that she might continue with her till some information was procured. A subject also of such immediate concern, was sufficient apology for avoiding any particular conversation with Miss Belfield, who called as usual, about noon, and whose susceptible heart was much affected by the evident disturbance in which she found Cecilia.

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The whole day paſſed, and no news arrived: but, greatly to her aſtoniſhment, Mrs. Harrel in the evening prepared for going to an aſſembly; yet declaring at the ſame time it was extremely diſagreeable to her, only ſhe was afraid, if ſhe ſtayed away, every body would ſuppoſe ſomething was the matter.

"Who then at laſt, thought Cecilia, are half ſo much the ſlaves of the world as the gay and the diſſipated? Thoſe who work for hire, have at leaſt their hours of reſt; thoſe who labour for ſubſiſtence, are at liberty when ſubſiſtence is procured; but thoſe who toil to pleaſe the vain and the idle, undertake a taſk which can never be finiſhed, however ſcrupulouſly all private peace, and all internal comfort, may be ſacrificed in reality to the folly of ſaving appearances!"

Loſing, however, the motive for which ſhe had given up her own engagement, ſhe now ſent for her chair, in order to ſpend an hour or two with Mrs. Delvile.

The ſervants, as they conducted her up ſtairs, ſaid they would call their lady; and in entering the drawing-room ſhe ſaw, reading and alone, young Delvile.

He ſeemed much ſurpriſed, but received her with the utmoſt reſpect, apologizing for the abſence of his mother, whom he ſaid had underſtood ſhe was not to ſee her till the next day, and had left him to write letters now, that ſhe might then be at liberty.

Cecilia

Cecilia in return made excuſes for her ſeeming inconſiſtency; after which, for ſome time, all converſation dropt.

The ſilence was at length broken by young Delvile's ſaying, "Mr. Belfield's merit has not been thrown away upon Lord Vannel's: he has heard an excellent character of him from all his former acquaintance, and is now fitting up an apartment for him in his own houſe till his ſon begins his tour."

Cecilia ſaid ſhe was very happy in hearing ſuch intelligence; and then again they were both ſilent.

"You have ſeen," ſaid young Delvile, after this ſecond pauſe, "Mr. Belfield's ſiſter?"

Cecilia, not without changing colour, anſwered, "Yes, Sir."

"She is very amiable," he continued, "too amiable, indeed, for her ſituation, ſince her relations, her brother alone excepted, are all utterly unworthy of her."

He ſtopt; but Cecilia made no anſwer, and he preſently added, "Perhaps you do not think her amiable? —— you may have ſeen more of her, and know ſomething to her diſadvantage?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, with a forced alacrity, "but only I was thinking that —— did you ſay you knew all her relations?"

"No," he anſwered, "but when I have been with Mr. Belfield, ſome of them have called upon him."

Again

Again they were both ſilent; and then Cecilia, aſhamed of her apparent backwardneſs to give praiſe, compelled herſelf to ſay, "Miſs Belfield is indeed a very ſweet girl, and I wiſh ——" ſhe ſtopt, not well knowing herſelf what ſhe meant to add.

"I have been greatly pleaſed," ſaid he, after waiting ſome time to hear if ſhe would finiſh her ſpeech, "by being informed of your goodneſs to her, and I think ſhe ſeems equally to require and to deſerve it. I doubt not you will extend it to her when ſhe is deprived of her brother, for then will be the time that by doing her moſt ſervice, it will reflect on yourſelf moſt honour."

Cecilia, confounded by this recommendation, faintly anſwered, "Certainly, —— whatever is in my power,—I ſhall be very glad ——"

And juſt then Mrs. Delvile made her appearance, and during the mutual apologies that followed, her ſon left the room. Cecilia, glad of any pretence to leave it alſo, inſiſted upon giving no interruption to Mrs. Delvile's letter writing, and having promiſed to ſpend all the next day with her, hurried back to her chair.

The reflections that followed her thither, were by no means the moſt ſoothing; ſhe began now to apprehend that the pity ſhe had beſtowed upon Miſs Belfield, Miſs Belfield in a ſhort time might bellow upon her:

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at any other time, his recommendation would merely have ſerved to confirm her opinion of his benevolence, but in her preſent ſtate of anxiety and uncertainty, every thing gave birth to conjecture, and had power to alarm her. He had behaved to her of late with the ſtrangeſt coldneſs and diſtance,——his praiſe of Henrietta had been ready and animated.—Henrietta ſhe knew adored him, and ſhe knew not with what reaſon,—but an involuntary ſuſpicion aroſe in her mind, that the partiality ſhe had herſelf once excited, was now transferred to that little-dreaded, but not leſs dangerous rival.

Yet, if ſuch was the caſe, what was to become either of the pride or the intereſt of his family? Would his relations ever pardon an alliance ſtimulated neither by rank nor riches? would Mr. Delvile, who hardly ever ſpoke but to the high-born, without ſeeming to think his dignity ſomewhat injured, deign to receive for a daughter-in-law the child of a citizen and tradeſman? would Mrs. Delvile herſelf, little leſs elevated in her notions, though infinitely ſofter in her manners, ever condeſcend to acknowledge her? Cecilia's own birth and connections, ſuperior as they were to thoſe of Miſs Belfield, were even openly diſdained by Mr. Delvile, and all her expectations of being received into his family were founded upon *the largeneſs* of her fortune, in favour of

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which the brevity of her genealogy might perhaps paſs unnoticed. But what was the chance of Miſs Belfield, who neither had anceſtors to boaſt, nor wealth to allure?

This thought, however, awakened all the generoſity of her ſoul: "If," cried ſhe, "the advantages I poſſeſs are merely thoſe of riches, how little ſhould I be flattered by any appearance of preference! and how ill can I judge with what ſincerity it may be offered! happier in that caſe is the lowly Henrietta, who to poverty may attribute neglect, but who can only be ſought and careſſed from motives of pureſt regard. She loves Mr. Delvile, loves him with the moſt artleſs affection:—perhaps, too, he loves her in return,—why elſe his ſolicitude to know my opinion of her, and why ſo ſudden his alarm when he thought it unfavourable? Perhaps he means to marry her, and to ſacrifice to her innocence and her attractions all plans of ambition, and all views of aggrandizement:—thrice happy Henrietta, if ſuch is thy proſpect of felicity! to have inſpired a paſſion ſo diſintereſted, may humble the moſt inſolent of thy ſuperiors, and teach even the wealthieſt to envy thee!

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.